■ METRO/A15

11 old and sickly women inmates pardoned, say goodbye to Correctional

■ BUSINESS/B1

Thrift banks' real estate loan exposure up 13.6%

■ SUPER/C3

Peek at Tim Yap's crystal ball for the '26 to watch out for in 2006'

■ NEWS/A5

Garci's masked guards were gov't men, says ex-Comelec executive

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Pinay-Aussie hires hit man to kill hubby in Manila bar

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA—A PHILIPPINE-born woman allegedly working as a prostitute hired a hit man to kill her Filipino husband in Manila so she could claim A$400,000 (US$291,000) in life insurance, a prosecutor told a court Friday.

Jennifer Remigio, 30, is charged with conspiring to kill Michael Remigio, 30—who was shot to

PINAY-AUSSIE/ A4

RP's fireworks capital hurting from globalization

By Alcuin Papa

GLOBALIZATION HAS COME TO A SMALL barangay in Bocaue, Bulacan.

Located just north of Manila, Barangay Turo lies in the so-called Mecca of the fireworks industry in Luzon, if not the whole country.

RP'S GLOBALIZATION/ A4

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Saturday, December 31, 2005 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 23 P18
website: www.inq7.net

Arrest of 4 GIs pressed

Lawmakers decry US 'double standard'

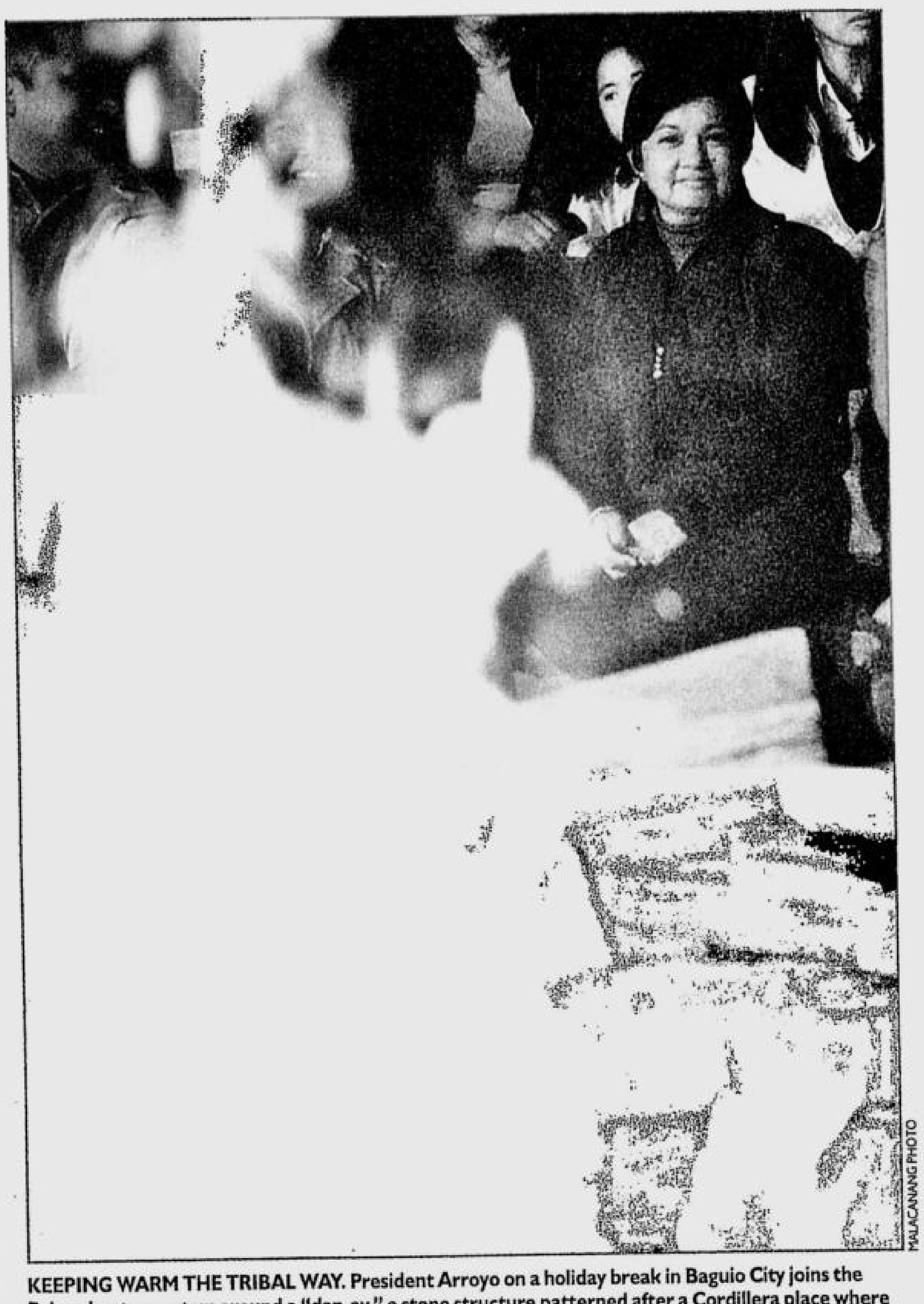
By Philip Tubeza, Armand N. Nocum and TJ Burgonio

LAWMAKERS SCORED the special treatment accorded four US Marines charged with raping a Filipino woman who are now "detailed" at the Joint US Military Assistance Group (Jusmag), an office within the US Embassy compound in Manila. But the Department of Justice sees nothing wrong with the arrangement, though it is pressing for the court to issue the arrest warrant for the accused.

The INQUIRER learned from Ed Malaya, executive director of the Department of Foreign Affairs legal division, on Thursday that the accused were on "temporary duty" at Jusmag.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday that "what's important is they [US servicemen] are available at the stage of the trial when they are needed," like their arraignment or when witnesses, especially the victim,

ARREST/ A6


MALACANANG PHOTO

KEEPING WARM THE TRIBAL WAY. President Arroyo on a holiday break in Baguio City joins the Palace beat reporters around a "dap-ay," a stone structure patterned after a Cordillera place where disputes are settled. Ms Arroyo and reporters warm up to each other as they sing together in harmony.

BAGONG TAON, BAGONG INGAY NAMAN!!!

Celebrate with a roar, not with a bang

By Julie M. Aurelio

IMAGINE LOUDSPEAKERS BLARING rock music while young and old people alike scream New Year's greetings at the top of their lungs. Kids blowing *torotots* until they run out of air. Dining tables groaning with food for the *media noche*.

It's a typical New Year's celebration—sans the usual *lolo* thunder, *bawang* or *sinturon ni Hudas* punctuating the festivities

CELEBRATE/ A4

Safe New Year: Here's how

IN AN ADVISORY SENT TO THE INQUIRER, the Ecowaste Coalition gave suggestions on ecologically correct ways to welcome the New Year. Filipinos wanting to join in the revelry without having to buy firecrackers can:

- Blow traditional paper horns (torotot) to create noise.
- Place coins, dried beans or pebbles in old tin cans for an improvised maracas, or string together old bottle caps for a tambourine.
- Scrounge around for old plastic bottles, cans and other objects which could be used as improvised percussion instruments.
- Bang pots and pans. Or pound on steel washbasins for a louder, bigger sound.
- Knock or bang empty coconut shells together. You can get the shells for free from coconut vendors.
- Play your favorite music and while at it, why not sing along and dance?
- Out of practice with the guitar? Then it's time to hit the drums, strum the guitar, and have an instant New Year's gig.
- Shout at the top of your lungs, and wish prosperity for all.

Julie M. Aurelio

GMA, journalists sing carols around bonfire

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—IT IS CALLED "dap-ay," a place where Cordillera tribal elders gather to settle disputes, and it was where President Macapagal-Arroyo and journalists gathered around a bonfire to seek warmth.

The circular stone structure that can serve as a virtual townhall was built on a lawn just across from The Mansion, where Ms Arroyo and her family are staying for the holidays.

There, on Thursday night, Ms Arroyo joined media people in singing Kapampangan, Ilocano and pop songs, and Christmas carols, too.

Helen Tibaldo, regional director of the Philippine Information Agency, said Ms Arroyo's presence in the dap-ay symbolized her sincerity in re-establishing a harmonious relationship with the media.

"The President [wants to see] how the working media are do-

GMA/ A6

NEWS BEHIND THE BIG NEWS

EDITOR'S NOTE: We looked back to 20 years of INQUIRER reporting and picked the following four shattering events with global repercussions that had challenged the INQUIRER's in-your-face style of reportage, its commitment and passion to its vocation as a seeker of truth. Anyway, the best truth that can be had before the deadline hits.

In affirmation and celebration of the newly restored Philippine democracy, we rallied with all our mind and heart behind the duly elected President Corazon Aquino whose election was vindicated and proclaimed by People Power for four days at Edsa I in February 1986, through at least six full-blown coup attempts during her six-year term.

Then there was the dogged sleuthing by a neophyte correspondent in his Mindanao hometown that vilified him as a traitor, and the INQUIRER as unpatriotic, but which led to the unmasking of the big cheats in the Little League.

A late-night meeting between a crusading congressman and three INQUIRER editors at a Quezon City girlie bar resulted in a series of ground-breaking stories on how congressmen were pigging out on taxpayer monies.

The INQUIRER also took an unprecedented and unpopular position against the continued stay of the US military bases which had been in the country for nearly a century. President Cory Aquino herself went on a "persuasion" march to the Senate—and in the rain yet—where the majority stuck to an anti-bases position.

The stories behind these big stories are told by the reporters themselves who covered them up close while struggling not to get personal. Tough to do in our highly personalistic society. But enthused with the INQUIRER's passion for the "best obtainable version of the truth," at press time that is, they just did it.

Big Bang 6 times over, or 9, 10

By Fe Zamora

UNTIL THE FIRST SHOT IS FIRED, A COUP d'etat in the Philippine setting is nothing but a rumor, a plot or a figment of a Filipino's excitable imagination.

But when the opening salvo came from the Logistics Command (Logcom) adjoining Camp Aguinaldo in the morning of Dec. 1, 1989, finally substantiating what had just been rumor for months, it still came as a shock.

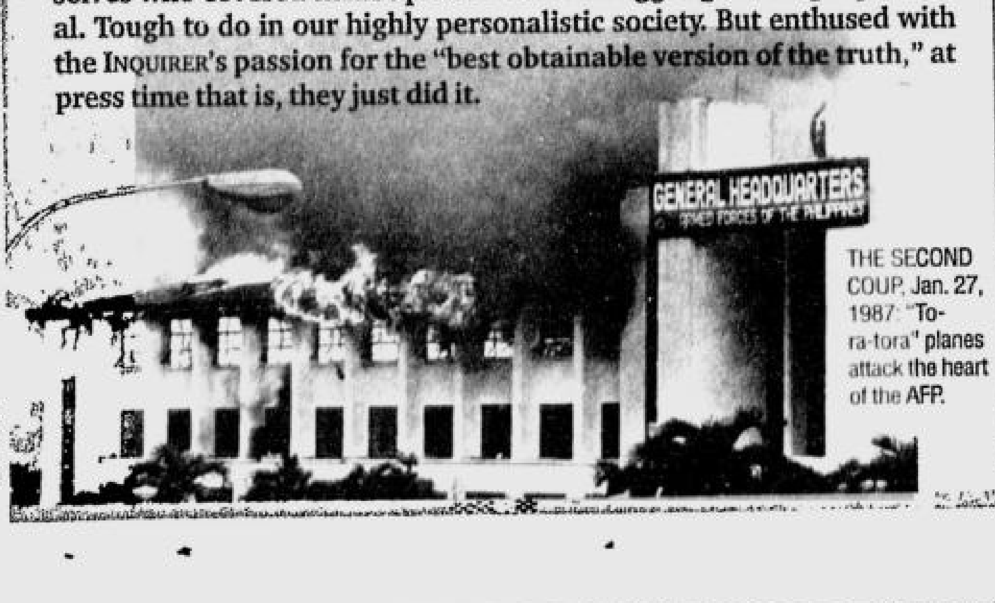
The survival instinct drove me and some 50 other reporters and cameramen to duck under wooden tables for cover. My acquired reporter's reflexes had me hugging the black rotary-dial telephone as my lifeline to the INQUIRER desk.

The day before on Nov. 30, in a press conference, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Renato de Villa had said that an attempt to oust President Corazon Aquino had been uncovered and effectively neutralized.

De Villa had spoken too soon. By midnight, rebel troops had seized Villamor Air Base, parts of Fort Bonifacio in Makati, Sangley Point in Cavite, as well as key military camps in Cebu, Legaspi and Cagayan de Oro cities. Even the Logcom, a small camp adjacent to Camp Aguinaldo, had fallen into rebel hands.

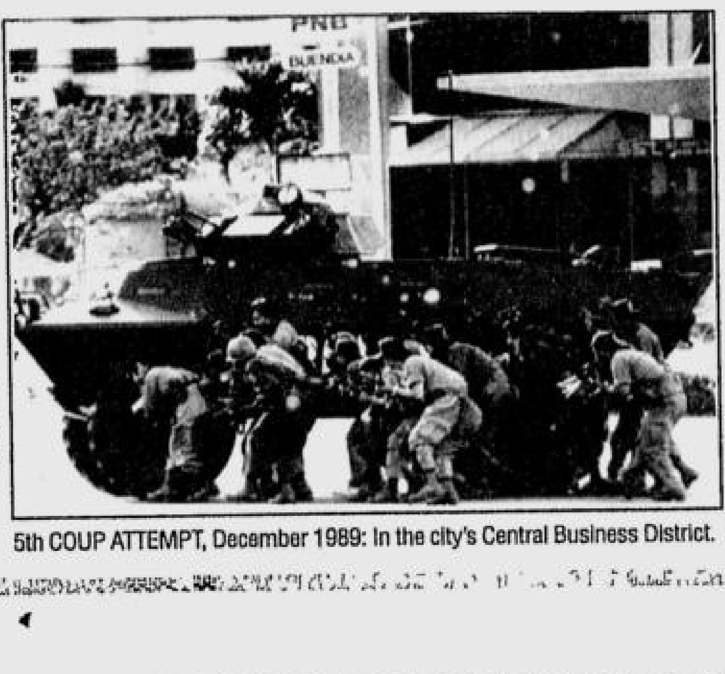
De Villa's orders were to retake Logcom immediately. Soldiers in bandoliers prepared to move. A hypertensive colonel herded reporters from the open grandstand in Camp

BIG BANG/ A6

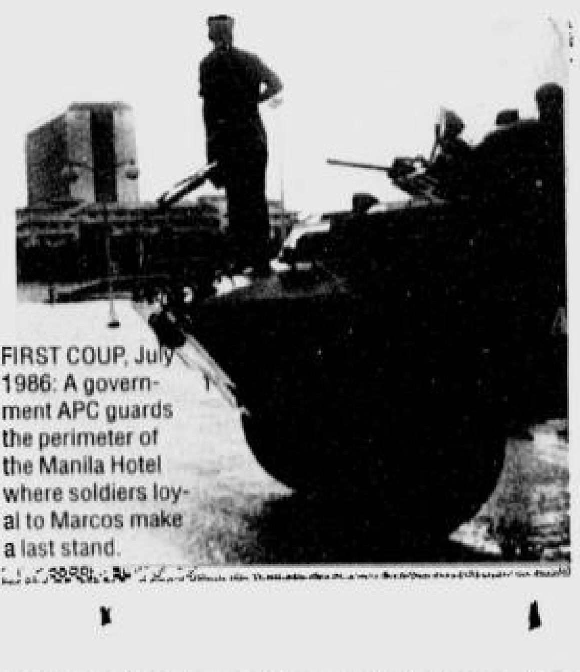


PDI PHOTO

THE SECOND COUP, Jan. 27, 1987: "To-ra-tora" planes attack the heart of the AFP.



5th COUP ATTEMPT, December 1989: In the city's Central Business District.


FIRST COUP, July 1986: A government APC guards the perimeter of the Manila Hotel where soldiers loyal to Marcos make a last stand.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol region and Eastern Visayas will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers. SOURCE: PAGASA

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Second FRONTPAGE

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2005

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/12/31/05

Talks showed people oppose 'no-el,' says ConCom member

By Vincent Cabreza, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau,*
and TJ Burgonio

BAGUIO CITY—SOME MEMBERS OF THE CONSULTATIVE Commission that recently submitted its proposals for constitutional amendments are now claiming that the public had never supported the controversial "no election" provision during the extensive public consultations that they conducted throughout the country.

"Majority of the people we consulted in the provinces did not even want Charter change, they simply wanted a change of officials," said Betty Lourdes Tabanda, a former Baguio vice mayor and ConCom member.

The 54-member ConCom, handpicked by President Macapagal-Arroyo to draft recommended changes to the Constitution, submitted its report in mid-December, which Malacañang has transmitted to Congress.

Tabanda is one of 22 dissenting ConCom members who objected to the majority vote extending the terms of all elected officials in the transition to a parliamentary system of government.

She said the group of 22 has begun discussions on how to get to the public the details of how the people reacted to the issue of term extensions when this was raised in provincial consultative sessions which the ConCom conducted from Sept. 10 to Dec. 15.

"I have been asked to join these meetings next week," said Tabanda who spoke to the INQUIRER during the 109th Rizal Day rites here on Friday.

Tabanda, Rita Linda Jimeno, president of the Philippine Bar Council; Liberato Laus, former director of the Bases Conversion Development Authority, and economist Gonzalo Jurado led the ConCom team that held consultations in the Cordillera this month.

Negative comments

When they introduced the "no election" proposal during the consultation, they received negative comments, "except from sitting politicians," Tabanda said.

"Many felt that changes will happen if they can elect new leaders instead," she said.

The Cordillera was included in the ConCom's list of areas for consultation because of its indigenous population.

The region is the site of some of the country's earliest mines, and its support is considered crucial to government efforts to attract foreign capital into the mining sector.

Ancestral land rights

In a Wednesday press conference at The Mansion here, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor said a more liberalized Charter should benefit the Cordilleras, which he described as being "open" to the mining industry.

But Cordillera delegates who attended the ConCom consultations voted down an amendment proposing to ease restrictions on foreign ownership of natural resources out of fear that it would impact on ancestral land rights.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President had not passed judgment on the substance of the ConCom draft report which she had transmitted to Congress.

He said the Palace would leave the matter of Charter change and political term extensions to Congress which is the body that will decide on constitutional amendments.

Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan, vice chair of the House of Representatives' committee on constitutional amendments, said the House has filed a resolution proposing that the House and the Senate constitute themselves into a constituent assembly to draft the amendments.

But Domogan said the Senate has rejected this avenue for Charter change.

Only transitory

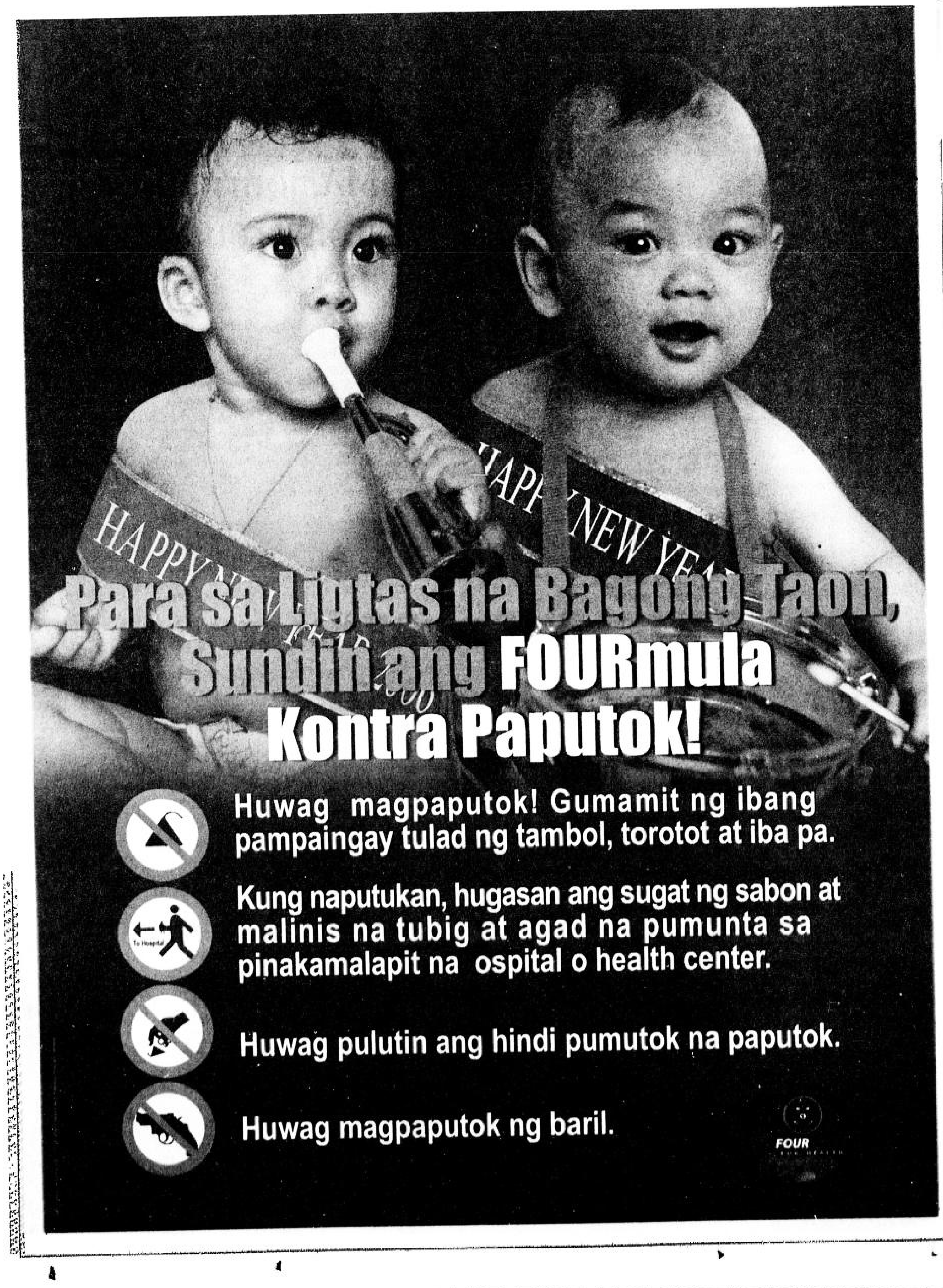
Meanwhile, the ConCom yesterday explained that its proposal to scrap the 2007 elections was just a "transitory provision" while the country is preparing to shift to a parliamentary system in 2010, but failed to convince some senators.

The ConCom came out with a full-page ad in a major daily titled "What is really immoral?" explaining the reasons behind the proposal which has been seen as an attempt to bribe incumbent officials with term extensions so they would support Charter change.

"We have proposed 'No elections in 2007' as a transitory provision for a smooth transition to a parliamentary-federal government because the necessary institutions for credible elections might not be in place by then," the ad said.

The commission, chaired by academic Jose V. Abueva, said it would be "divisive" and "costly" for the government to hold elections "so soon" after the national plebiscite on the proposed constitutional reforms.

But Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, was unconvinced, saying the ConCom had betrayed its true intentions when it came up with the "no elections" proposal.



HAPPY NEW YEAR
HAPPY NEW YEAR
Para sa Ligtas na Bagong Taon,
Sundin ang FOURmula
Kontra Paputok!
Huwag magpaputok! Gumamit ng ibang pampaingay tulad ng tambol, torotot at iba pa.
To Hospital
Kung naputukan, hugasan ang sugat ng sabon at malinis na tubig at agad na pumunta sa pinakamalapit na ospital o health center.
Huwag pulutin ang hindi pumutok na paputok.
Huwag magpaputok ng baril.
FOUR

Oil firms cut prices by 50¢ in new year

MOTORISTS HAVE REASON TO CELEBRATE the coming of the new year as local oil firms reduce their gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter on the first day of 2006.

Initiating the rollback is new player Eastern Petroleum Corp., which will implement its price reduction at 10 tonight.

Following at 12:01 a.m. of Jan. 1 are refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., as well as importers Caltex Philippines Inc., Seaoil Petroleum Corp. and Flying V.

For the rest of 2006, motorists should be able to expect more stable pump prices as world oil prices start to stabilize and even decline.

In an earlier interview, Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion said oil prices were not likely to be as erratic as they had been the past two years as several changes were taking place in the international market.

He said the United States and other big oil users had signified plans to more aggressively tap alternative energy sources, including nuclear, coal-to-gasoline and ethanol.

"They're doing this because they don't want to be so dependent on oil, seeing what happened to prices these past months," he said.

Another factor that would contribute to more stable oil prices, he said, was Russia's move to pump and refine more oil to address global demand.

Also, once all political issues in Iraq are resolved and once the country starts producing more oil, Concepcion said the global supply would rise to more comfortable levels, which would help keep prices down.

"Iraq will not bomb its own pipelines, so there will be less threat of terrorist attacks there. This will happen when all issues in the country are resolved," he said.

Considering all these factors, he said, overall dependence on oil would surely go down.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude had climbed to an average of $53.45 a barrel as of Dec. 22 from the November average of $51.39 a barrel. *Abigail L. Ho*

Jan. 4 opening for public schools

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DepEd) has set the resumption of classes in the elementary and high school levels for public schools around the country on Jan. 4 next year.

In a memorandum dated Dec. 29, DepEd Officer in Charge Fe Hidalgo said offices of the education department will be open on Jan. 2.

"For the information and guidance of all concerned, all offices shall resume Jan. 2, 2006, while classes in the elementary and secondary levels shall start Jan. 4, 2006," the memo said.

The memo was addressed to all DepEd regional directors, bureau directors and division superintendents.

The DepEd has left to the officials of private schools in all levels and state colleges and universities to decide when their schools will resume classes. *Alcuin Papa*

Court gives Erap more time with ma

By Nelson F. Flores

THE SANDIGANBAYAN ON THURSDAY EXtended by 14 hours the scheduled New Year's Day visit of former President Joseph Estrada to his mother after an impassioned plea by his lawyer that this could be the ailing, 100-year-old woman's last New Year celebration.

Under the court's new ruling, Estrada will be allowed to visit Doña Mary Ejercito at her home on Kennedy Street, Greenhills, San Juan, from 5 p.m. on Dec. 31 until 7 a.m. on Jan. 2.

Estrada's original New Year pass from the Sandiganbayan allowed him to stay at his mother's place only until 5 p.m. on New Year's Day after which he was to be returned to his rest house in Tanay, Rizal.

Estrada is under house arrest at the Tanay rest house while awaiting completion of his trial on plunder charges, which is considered a heinous crime punishable with death by injection.

But while the Sandiganbayan extended Estrada's furlough, it forbade him from visiting his own home on nearby Polk Street. He is also subject to whatever security measures the Philippine National Police deems adequate.

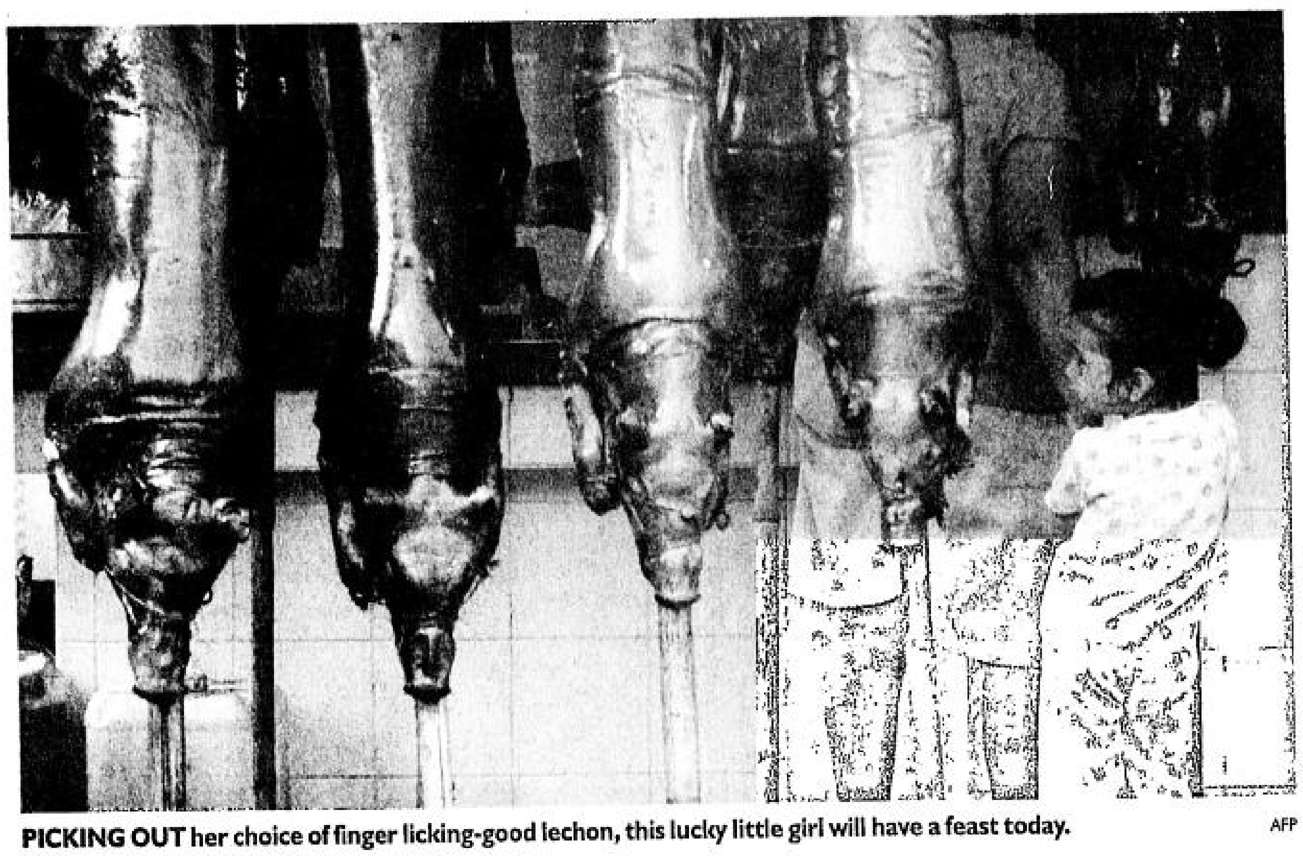
In asking the court's Special Division to modify its original Dec. 14 pass, Estrada's lawyer, former Sen. Rene Saguisag, pointed to Doña Mary's deteriorating health and advanced age and said there was a strong possibility that this would be her last New Year with Estrada.

MGA PLDT SUBSCRIBERS, ANG INYONG PINAKA-AABANGANG UNLIMITED TAWAGAN AT SAYA SA JANUARY 7 NA!

Abangan!

PLDT

Iba Pa Rin Ang May PLDT Landline



PICKING OUT her choice of finger licking-good lechon, this lucky little girl will have a feast today. AFP

PICKING UP THE PIECES of his life, this little boy and his family end and begin the year with nothing. Shanties along Manila Bay in Tondo of nearly 3,000 families were burned on Friday. AP

COME BLOW YOUR HORNS, not guns, policemen set the example to stress the silence of their guns to welcome the New Year. JOAN BONDOC

BUT BOYS WILL BE BOYS, and they need to have a blast. JOAN BONDOC

Firecracker fire triggers 'Gapo stampede; 12 hurt

By Ansbert Joaquin
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—AT LEAST 12 PEOPLE were hurt yesterday when a firecracker exploded, sparking a fire and a stampede that marred a local festival.

Mayor James Gordon Jr., in a television interview, said an unidentified man lit a skyrocket near a row of stalls and this started the fire that also hit a bakeshop in Olongapo's business district.

People watching the festival's parade panicked.

Gordon said the fire was put out an hour later at about 3:30 p.m.

The parade, held to commemorate the city's Ulo ng Apo fiesta, was stopped for 30 minutes. Officials resumed the parade after the fire was contained.

Marmon Estrella, Gordon's executive assistant, said they were looking at the possibility of arson or sabotage.

He said reports his office had received indicated that a man threw a lighted cigarette butt at a firecracker stall.

The injured victims were taken to the James L. Gordon Memorial Hospital here.

Pinay-Aussie hires hit man to kill hubby in RP

From page A1

death as he sat in a car near a suburban Manila bar in October last year, prosecutor Carmen Matteo told a magistrates court in the southern city of Adelaide, where the couple had lived.

Remigio, who faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment if convicted, has not entered a plea to the charge.

She was denied bail Friday and remanded to custody until her next court appearance in February.

Arrested Dec. 14

The mother of a 7-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son was arrested on Dec. 14 in Sydney. The couple had lived in Australia for about 10 years.

Matteo alleged that Remigio and some family members hired a hit man to kill her husband while he was in the Philippines visiting his family.

Matteo argued that Remigio wanted to collect on the life insurance policy taken out on her husband two weeks before his death.

Nayon Café

The court did not hear whether the insurance company paid the claim.

Matteo alleged that Jennifer Remigio's brother, who was not named in court, took the husband and two of his friends to the Nayon Café on Oct. 13 last year.

Remigio was shot in the early hours of Oct. 14 after leaving the bar, while the defendant's brother remained in the bar on the pretense of paying for their drinks, Matteo said.

Sole beneficiary

Matteo said Jennifer, who lived in Adelaide until August this year, when she moved to Sydney allegedly to work as a prostitute, was the sole beneficiary of the life insurance policy.

Jennifer is of Philippine origin although her nationality was not detailed in court. *AP*

Celebrate with a roar, not with a bang

From page A1

every 10 seconds.

According to actor and environmentalist Roy Alvarez, New Year celebrations should eventually be that way.

"Just because it's hard [to do away with firecrackers], it doesn't mean we shouldn't try," he said in a phone interview.

Citing rising levels of air pollution, the Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines (Ecowaste Coalition) yesterday appealed to the public to think twice before lighting firecrackers during the New Year festivities.

"The level of environmental pollution rises during New Year's Eve. Metro Manila is already filled with smog, but the smog thickens during New Year, causing almost zero visibility," Ecowaste secretary Manny Calonzo said.

Calonzo said his group wanted to encourage people to use alternative ways of merrymaking to usher in the New Year. Lighting firecrackers releases chemical substances that pollute the air and cause respiratory problems, he said.

Like to be deaf?

Alvarez, vice chair of Ecowaste Coalition and president of Mother Earth Foundation, said excessive noise from firecrackers was not only irritating, but could also cause heart attacks, stress, hearing loss and high blood pressure.

"It won't help us if we greet the New Year deaf, so why continue something that is not a healthy practice?" he asked.

Quoting statistics from the Department of Health, Calonzo said that in 2004, there were 548 injuries from exploding firecrackers, 33 from stray bullets and four due to *watusi* ingestion.

Of the 548 firecracker-related cases, 393 were in the National Capital Region.

"We're hoping to reduce cases this year, considering the initiatives of DOH regarding the hazards of lighting firecrackers," Calonzo said.

The DOH has issued safety tips on celebrating the New Year to avoid and lessen the number of injuries.

Alvarez added that the money to be saved on firecrackers could be used to prepare a sumptuous and balanced meal for the *media noche*.

"Why would you throw away money? Every time you light a firecracker, you burn your hard-earned money away. Do we do this just because we've grown used to the booming noise of firecrackers every year?" Alvarez asked.

A New Year dream

"It will be great if we welcome the New Year with a whole body and all limbs attached. I hope people will be receptive to the message that we are trying to promote," Calonzo said.

Asked if he could foresee New Year celebrations without firecrackers, Calonzo said changing people's minds would be a painstaking process.

"Effective and popular education will help a lot in changing traditions that are not earth-friendly," he said. "We are dreaming of the time that we will greet the New Year in a less polluted environment."

Said Alvarez: "There are so many ways to be happy to start the New Year. Let's start the New Year by giving life, because what we do [lighting firecrackers] at the start of the year is to destroy life," he said.

Don't play doctor with firecracker wounds

By Leila B. Salaverria

IF YOU CAN'T STAY AWAY FROM FIRECRACKERS, at least don't play doctor.

New Year revelers injured by firecrackers should not self-medicate their wounds, even if minor, to avoid the risk of a tetanus infection, according to Dr. Enrique Tayag, director of the Department of Health's National Epidemiology Center.

"We are advising people not to self-medicate their injuries, no matter how small," Tayag said. "They should be examined immediately by medical professionals who can clean the wounds thoroughly so that they would not be infected by tetanus."

According to Tayag, some people think their injuries are healed because the wounds have closed. But he said that even if the skin closed over a wound, tetanus-causing bacteria could still be trapped inside the body.

As for washing the injured area with soap and water, Tayag said this would cleanse the surface but not the inner portion that the bacteria could have already entered.

A tetanus infection can show up anywhere from three to 28 days after the bacteria gets into the body, said Tayag.

Yuletide injuries

The symptoms of a tetanus infection include lockjaw, rigidity of muscles, difficulty in breathing and convulsions.

As of yesterday morning, the Department of Health has reported fewer Yuletide-related injuries in the runup to the New Year compared to last year.

A total of 132 Yuletide-related injuries nationwide have been reported since monitoring began Dec. 21. In the same period last year, 171 cases were recorded.

RP's fireworks capital hurting from globalization

From page A1

As each year draws to an end, buyers flock to the small barangay, jamming stores in a bid to score the latest and loudest in pyrotechnics.

Business has been fairly brisk but dealers say there is a difference—their sales have been affected by the entry of fireworks made in China and other Asian countries.

Michael Dinglasan's father started the family's fireworks business eight years ago. Business these days, although still good, can't compare to what it was around five years ago when the industry hit its peak, the 30-year-old Michael said.

Last year, he said buyers came in only near the end of December.

This year, at least, demand has been going up since after Christmas Day, Dinglasan said.

"At the rate this is going, I hope to finish off my stocks before New Year, that's for sure. In fact, my supply of the really strong firecrackers is gone," he said in Filipino.

Dinglasan said the supply was also short because of reduced production, which was caused in turn by the rising prices of materials.

Narciso Cano runs a smaller operation compared to Dinglasan.

"It's been hard but we still manage," Cano said. "It's a tradition for us Pinoys and with God's grace, my business is recovering. There has been a pickup in sales in the days after Christmas. We can actually break even, or take in a small profit."

Ban on foreign fireworks

Dinglasan and Cano agree that foreign-made fireworks should be banned from the country so that the Bocaue industry could fully develop.

"These fireworks made outside the country will kill our industry. It should be eliminated," Dinglasan told the INQUIRER. "We will never have the kind of profits we had before these came in."

Probably riding on the grisly TV images of people injured by firecracker blasts during New Year celebrations, companies distributing pyrotechnics from abroad advertise their products as safer than those made by locals.

Nice packaging

They also resort to imaginative packaging and inventive marketing, complete with colorful boxes, banners and audio-visual presentations in malls to entice buyers.

Local fireworks dealers refused to divulge income figures, saying they would only find out for sure after the New Year's buying spree.

Cano pointed to the economic crisis as another reason some buyers were shying away from fireworks this year.

"While families may still have a budget for fireworks, these are smaller than in previous years," Cano said.

Tito Petiles, Bocaue municipal tourism officer, agreed that the firecracker industry had been affected by globalization. Petiles was former head of the municipality's licensing division which issues permits to dealers and manufacturers.

Times have changed

"At the peak of the industry before the entry of foreign products, a bulk of our sales would come in by November," Petiles said. "We can also attribute the decreased demand to the economic situation. People might opt to buy more food, instead. So their budget for fireworks and firecrackers is smaller."

Petiles said the public should be wary of the claims of companies bringing in foreign-made fireworks that these were safer than local products.

"No matter how much you stress that their products are safer, that's not an assurance. It really all boils down to how the end user would handle the product."

Petiles said that since there was nothing they could do to stem the influx of foreign products, the local government had begun taking it as a challenge instead.

"We are struggling somewhat against globalization. But we see it as a challenge to improve our standards and to upgrade our technology to attract more customers," Petiles added.

He boasted that the local government was doing a lot to raise the quality of the town's firecracker products and its industry in general. In line with this, it has waged serious campaigns against the use of child labor and is continuously pushing for a "safety first" policy among manufacturers and dealers, he said.

Fireworks village

Local authorities are also intensifying their drive to collect more revenues from manufacturers and dealers, he said.

"The revenues the local government gets actually help, but the amount isn't as much as we expect it to be. Of course, the industry is seasonal and there are dealers who don't declare all their income. But they (dealers) have to understand that this comes back to them in the form of services."

Petiles said the local government would need all the funds it could get to push for the construction of a "fireworks village" in Bocaue—a central site where they can monitor manufacturers, regulate dealers' stocks, and make sure there is a safe distance between factories and residential areas.

Good old days

"There is some resistance from residents living in our proposed area. But the process of negotiations is ongoing," said Petiles. "We need this badly and hopefully next year, construction will be complete."

He added that they were also trying to boost local tourism to lessen the town's dependence on the fireworks industry.

For now, the Bocaue fireworks industry is trying to reconcile itself with the reality of smaller profits, with the good days possibly gone.

Different strokes for pro-, anti-GMA folks

By TJ Burgonio, Michael Lim Ubac and Christine Avendaño

POLITICIANS OF EVERY POLITICAL STRIPE are busy spinning their own take on the New Year message of optimism from President Macapagal-Arroyo and the hopefulness expressed by majority of Filipinos in the most recent opinion surveys.

As expected, administration lawmakers echoed the President's theme of "the best is yet to come" while the opposition saw nothing but "harder times ahead."

The new year would be much better for the country if the President allowed democratic institutions to work to resolve the "Hello Garci" tape scandal and other controversies dogging her, said opposition Sen. Rodolfo Biazon.

"This is not just about putting to rest these controversies. It's about strengthening the institutions and institutional processes by allowing them to work. A shortcut, manipulation, dismissal of these institutional processes can only contribute to further political instability," said Biazon.

Another oppositionist, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, said the people would "continue to clamor for the truth" behind the various scandals.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Etta Rosales saw nothing but misery for the middle and lower classes if the two-percent increase in the value-added tax were to be implemented as planned in February.

A VAT increase decreed by a President whose legitimacy is under question is a "recipe for a social revolution," declared Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras.

He said the strength of the peso, which the President said was the "rallying point" for the country's economic future was "nothing to brag about."

"It reminds us of what this country really is—a rotten place. When our sons, daughters and parents work abroad, it's a reflection of something terribly wrong with this country," said Paras.

But Ms Arroyo's congressional allies agreed with her expectations for 2006 as well as the hopes of the majority of Filipinos interviewed by the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia polling groups.

"The best things are yet to come," said Representatives Rodito Albano III and Ernesto Nieva.

In a joint statement, Albano and Nieva said the SWS survey, released the other day and showing that four out of five Filipinos had high hopes for 2006, amounted to a vote of confidence in the President and her reforms.

"This means people don't want to be swayed by the negative and destructive politics of the President's detractors. While 81 percent of Filipinos expressed optimism in 2004, the figure rose to 85 percent this year," they said.

Nieva said, however, that the government must not fail the "people's hope and expectations."

"There should be no more promises. Government must show more actions and results. We believe our government can do better next year," he said.

PRESIDENT Arroyo salutes the flag during Rizal Day rites in Baguio City. Behind her are, from left, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, Baguio Mayor Braulio Yaranon (partly hidden), DepEd OIC Fe Hidalgo, Rep. Mauricio Domogan, Ludovico Badoy of the National Historical Institute, Vice Admiral Ariston de los Reyes and the athletes of the Sea Games.

PCPO PHOTO

This time, GMA keeps mum at site of '02 vow not to run

By the PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo had no formal message on the 109th Rizal Day celebration at the city's monument to the national hero yesterday, three years to the day she declared here that she was not standing for election in 2004.

But the President surrounded herself with positive symbols of her rule at the annual flag-raising ceremony and these somewhat defined her administration's strengths in a year filled with political uncertainty.

At 7 a.m., Ms Arroyo, garbed in a red turtleneck sweater, a purple *ikat* (native weave) poncho and purple pants, laid a wreath at the Rizal monument here west of Burnham Park flanked by 23 female cadets of Philippine Military Academy Class of 2009. The honor guard battalion commander was also a woman, Fourth Class Cadet Maylen Pederanga Sagadraca of Floridablanca, Pampanga.

"It was the idea of my commandant of cadets [Brig. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig]. These are all the class' female cadets, to [validate for] the President [that women rule] in this government," said Lt. Gen. Cristolito Balaoing, PMA superintendent.

Victorious Filipino athletes of the recently concluded Southeast Asian Games, which the Philippines hosted and topped, stood at attention at the steps of the Rizal shrine while Ms Arroyo raised the flag to half-staff in honor of the national hero.

A Malacañang official said the Filipino athletes' victory in the SEA Games was politically beneficial to the President as it afforded her administration respite from the political crises bedeviling it.

The official said great effort was made to elicit sympathy for the President and the symbols—the women cadets and the victorious athletes—were meant to bury any recollections of Ms Arroyo's Dec. 30, 2002, declaration here.

The Chief Executive subsequently took back her words when she declared in October 2003 that she had changed her mind and was running for president. The elections in May 2004 ended in controversy about its outcome that continues to haunt her to this day.

The ceremony ended with the President witnessing the sealing of the muzzles of the firearms of the local police, security guards and members of a Baguio gun club by Armed Forces Vice Chief of Staff Vice Adm.l Ariston de los Reyes and Director General Arturo Lomibao of the Philippine National Police.

Interviewed by reporters after the rites, Ms Arroyo said her Rizal Day message was "for our youth to remember the values Jose Rizal fought for and the message that it gave the Filipino people."

She then segued to the SEA Games.

"For the athletes in the Cordillera, we are very happy that the SEA Games gave not only a boost [to] our collective morale, but also [the] opportunity for our many underprivileged communities to shine and we hope that they continue to do so," she said.

But other "heroes" left the rites disappointed.

Gulaterio Adalim, vice president for Cordillera of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines, said his group woke up at 6 a.m. to get to the venue early to hear the President talk about their welfare.

"We were expecting her to say something about the government's commitment to the [war] veterans," he told the INQUIRER.

"[We would have appreciated it] even if she said that there was no money and [the government] could get funds later. We can take that as long as she cares about our welfare. But not silence," Adalim said.

Rizalistas (members of a group who venerate Rizal) were at the shrine as early as Dec. 29, but they said they did not expect Ms Arroyo to speak after what happened in 2002.

Reports from Vincent Cabreza, Desiree Caluza and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Garci's guards were gov't men, says ex-poll exec

By Nash B. Maulana
PDI Mindanao Bureau

MALANGAS, ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR—When Virgilio Garcillano first emerged from five months in hiding, he gave the impression he had been under the protection of "Moro friends" right up to the time he gave himself up to Congress on a beach in Mindanao. Yesterday, one of his former colleagues in the Commission on Elections admitted that the hooded, armed men who had escorted Garcillano to the beach were not Moslem rebels but government security personnel.

Invitation

Lintang Bedol, former Maguindanao election officer, said it was he who hired the white speedboat that transported Garcillano, purportedly from some far-off place across the Moro Gulf, to Linek beach in Maguindanao on Dec. 4.

It was on that beach that a House of Representatives official, accompanied by police and reporters, handed the former election commissioner an invitation to appear before a Congressional investigation of the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal that nearly brought down President Macagapal-Arroyo.

Aboard the speedboat with Garcillano were several hooded men bearing Russian-made AK-47 and other assault rifles. A *kumpit*, a fast boat popular among the Tausugs in the Sulu archipelago, escorted the speedboat. Reporters covering the event had been made to believe that the beach was under the control of the Moro National Liberation Front.

No hint

Bedol said Garcillano boarded the speedboat in Cotabato City and then it traveled down the Mindanao River. The boat then traveled west to the open sea, turning several nautical miles past Bongo Island on the Moro Gulf, and back to Linek beach from the east.

"This then gave the public no hint as to where Garcillano ... actually came from, if only for security reasons," Bedol said.

At Cotabato City's Awang Airport, Garcillano was escorted by members of the Army's Task Force Tugis to Flight 188 of Philippine Airlines that ferried him to Manila the same day.

Meeting

Bedol said that before giving his first media interview on Nov. 27, Garcillano, accompanied by a driver and lawyers Eddie Tamondong and Thomas Garcillano Jr., had actually spent three days at his house in Cotabato City.

"But Garcillano never spoke to anyone as to where he had been before (our) Nov. 26 meeting," he said.

He said the elaborate charade involving the speedboats and armed men was employed to keep people away from the places were Garcillano claimed to have been hiding. Garcillano denied he had flown to Singapore en route to other parts of the world as the Singapore government had reported.

Bedol did not say what units the armed men belonged to.

Bedol was mentioned twice in the Garci tapes, particularly on the issues of the pre-proclamation rally in Cotabato City and the election controversy in South Upi, Maguindanao.

Elections director

Pressed as to where Garcillano had really been hiding, an official privy to the speedboat arrangements recalled that Garcillano had been elections director in Northern Mindanao prior to his 2001 appointment replacing Commissioner Regalado Maambong.

Asked whether it was his former boss speaking on the tape, Bedol said he and Garcillano's friends in legal circles believed "it might be" him on the tape.

But he said this could not incriminate Garcillano because the tape was "illegally obtained through wire-tapping."

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Arrest of 4 GIs pressed

From page A1

make an "identification" of the accused.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said there was nothing wrong with the four US servicemen being on duty at Jusmag.

"What's important is the moment we serve the warrants of arrest, they turn over the custody (of the accused) to the Philippine authorities. That's the crucial issue."

He said the Olongapo court should immediately issue the arrest warrants when the court convenes next week.

But he said no warrants had been issued even after a case was formally filed this month because the judges were on leave for the holidays.

He said the case would be raffled off among the four Olongapo judges on Jan. 3. The judge who gets the case would then proceed to issue the arrest warrants.

Like Zuño, Gonzalez said the court should immediately serve the warrants of arrest. "I think, technically, it must be served. That is the process, you have to serve the warrant to the accused," the justice secretary said.

Hitting the "double standard" of the US Embassy, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the accused should be detained.

"They should be [kept] in a detention facility very much like Filipinos who are accused of common crimes in the United States," Escudero said.

"Whatever 'special' status they have as US servicemen, they lost it when they committed a crime punishable by our laws," he said.

No violation

The US servicemen are "technically in the custody of the US," the justice secretary said.

"I don't see any violation for as long as the provision on waiver of custody remains," Gonzalez said.

He was referring to a provision in the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) that states that should the Americans "demand" custody of its men charged with an offense, the Philippine government can "waive our authority" to take custody of them for the duration of the trial.

"What's important is they are here," Gonzalez said. "Actually, even if they are not here, as long as the US keeps its word that they will cooperate and these people remain available at any stage of the proceedings, that is okay for me because what's important is they are here for the trial."

Six US servicemen originally underwent preliminary investigation before the Olongapo City prosecutor's office on allegations that they raped a 22-year-old Filipino woman inside a van at the Subic Bay Freeport, a former US naval base.

Four of them, along with the Filipino van driver Timoteo Soriano Jr., were formally charged on Tuesday, namely, Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier and Lance Corporals Dominic Duplantis, Daniel Smith and Keith Silkwood. The complaints against the two others—Lance Corporals Corey Burris and Albert Lara—were dismissed.

Wrong

"Of course, it's wrong," said Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño about letting the four US servicemen work at Jusmag instead of spending time in a detention cell.

"Under normal circumstances, they would be in jail. But because our government is such a puppet to the US, it allows these soldiers to trample over our laws," Casiño said.

"If the same thing happened in the US, do you think US authorities would tolerate this? Of course not," he said.

It's up to DOJ, DFA

For the government to gain custody of the accused, the DOJ should work for the issuance of warrants of arrest against them in accordance with the VFA and judicial procedures, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said.

"It's the DOJ which should provide the requirements for the government to acquire custodial jurisdiction of the four American servicemen. Then the DOJ will ask the DFA to make the formal move," Biazon said in a phone interview.

"The ball is in the hands of the DOJ and DFA to seek custody of the four Marines."

Exercise sovereignty

The senator, who chairs the committee on national defense, is a member of the Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Rep. Antonio Cuenco.

Biazon remains optimistic that the government has a big chance of gaining custody of the four US servicemen despite expected strong opposition from the other camp.

"If we follow judicial procedures and the provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement, we have a chance," he said, stressing that taking custody of the accused would prevent them from "disappearing and evading prosecution."

Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, another member of the bicameral committee on the VFA, pressed the government to exercise its sovereignty to gain custody of the four Marines.

"We are a sovereign country and we have our own criminal justice system to adhere to. No one is above the law. No matter who gets hurt, the rule of law must be the highest interest that we must consider," he said.

Prosecutors earlier demanded custody of the Americans, but Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the VFA, said the VFA allowed the US government to take custody of the accused until the case was decided.

Renegotiate VFA

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, Casiño and Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas said the lenient treatment of the accused emphasized the need for the Philippine government to insist that it take custody over them.

Escudero, Rosales and Bukidnon Rep. Nereus Acosta said the mere "detailing" of the four accused with Jusmag showed that the VFA should be reviewed or renegotiated "to provide parity" between the two countries.

"This should serve as a painful lesson to us so that government negotiators of similar agreements should provide for more stringent and pro-Filipino clauses that can and will protect the right to redress of our nationals should they be aggrieved," Escudero said.

Acosta said the Jusmag detail instead of detention reinforced the unequal relationship between the two countries. "This points to a clearer need to revisit the VFA agreement and recognize the fundamentally asymmetrical power relation between the US and RP."

Rosales pointed out that the United States considered the VFA a mere executive agreement since the US Senate had yet to ratify it.

"An executive agreement cannot supersede our laws. We have to assert our laws and take custody of the US [servicemen]," Rosales said.

Annex of US Embassy

The militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan criticized the DFA for its haplessness in dealing with the US Embassy and pressing for custody of the four US servicemen.

Bayan said the DFA should not concede that the Philippines may not get custody of the accused.

"Despite all these developments, the DFA has taken a cavalier attitude toward the US servicemen. Foreign affairs officials seem to be acting as if the DFA is an annex of the US Embassy," Dr. Carol Araullo, Bayan chairperson, said.

"There should be no ifs and buts about the issue of Philippine custody. The DFA officials like Zosimo Paredes should not preempt the courts by conceding at this early juncture that the Philippines cannot gain custody of the four accused," she said. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

THE PYRO OLYMPICS competition continues to be a dazzling sight over Manila Bay on the fourth day of the five-day competition, the first time it's held in the country. Twelve countries are showcasing their styles as thousands thrill. The winners will be known Friday night.

JUN RAPANAN/CONTRIBUTOR

GMA, journalists sing carols …

From page A1

ing, where they are living and how they are having fun. So this is a different President this time," Tibaldo said.

It sounded like a different Ms Arroyo from the one who addressed a broadcasters' meeting here in November and lamented the media's supposed focus on negative stories.

Reaching out

She had urged the media then to cast aside its "bad boy image" to help the country progress.

Tibaldo said Ms Arroyo was trying to reach out to journalists.

"Definitely, she wants to establish a harmonious relationship with the media," Tibaldo said. "You could actually feel her warmth as she was enjoying singing Christmas carols with reporters. She asked 'Who are these guys singing?' I told her they were from the local media."

Members of the Baguio Correspondents and Broadcasters Club led in the singing.

They serenaded Ms Arroyo with Ilocano ditties "Manang Biday" and "Daytoy a Balay," and the Kapampangan song "Atin Cu Pung Singsing."

Ms Arroyo, who is fluent in Kapampangan and Ilocano, sang along.

The journalists also sang contemporary pop songs, such as "Uso pa ba ang Harana" by Parokya ni Edgar, and "Pinoy Ako," the theme of ABS-CBN's hit reality show "Pinoy Big Brother.

Light moments

Tibaldo said Ms Arroyo visited the dap-ay after Assistant Press Secretary Jose Capadocia told her about it.

She said Capadocia had wanted the President to spend time with journalists covering her activities during the holidays.

"It is our light moment with the working media. [Ms Arroyo] also wanted to check where the Malacañang press people were staying. We told her that this dap-ay is where our local and national media can converge, enjoy and have fun while covering her activities," Tibaldo said.

The dap-ay was built on the PIA lawn by the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Stones from Kennon

Mariano Alquiza, DPWH regional director, said Tibaldo wanted a structure where members of the media could converge and socialize.

The PIA's dap-ay is bigger than those found in communities around the Cordillera.

The traditional dap-ay holds fewer than 10 people. The PIA's dap-ay can accomodate more than 20.

Alquiza said the construction of the dap-ay required no budget because the stones used in the structure came from Kennon Road.

Ms Arroyo stayed in the dap-ay for 45 minutes.

Big Bang 6 times over, or 9, 10

Military intervention from February 1986 to November 1990

- **Feb. 22-25, 1986,** aborted coup led to People Power I
- **July 6-8, 1986,** Manila Hotel takeover by Marcos loyalists
- **Nov. 11, 1986,** aborted "God Save the Queen" coup
- **Jan. 27, 1987,** GMA Channel 7 incident
- **April 18, 1987,** Black Saturday mutiny in Fort Bonifacio
- **July 2, 1987** aborted attempt to take over the Manila International Airport
- **Aug. 28-29, 1987,** coup attempt
- **Dec. 1-7, 1989** coup attempt,
- **March 4, 1990,** mutiny in Tuguegarao
- **Oct. 4, 1990,** mutiny in Cagayan de Oro

From page A1

Aguinaldo to the dugout, a low-ceilinged room tucked beneath the concrete tiers. I was in the dugout when the first volley shook the grounds of Camp Aguinaldo.

It was not my first coup, but it was still as startling as the first. The coup jitters and red alerts that were redundant in my coverage as a defense reporter that year, it turned out, had not steeled me enough for the Big Bang. Not even the fact that, by then, I had become a veteran of some sort of the INQUIRER's coup coverage.

10 coups, sort of, in 4 years

In a period of four years, the INQUIRER covered a total of eight events that could be categorized as plots and attempts at a coup d'etat, putsch, military adventurism/intervention, mutiny, military uprising or a power grab.

The INQUIRER covered a total of 10 incidents that happened between February 1986 and December 1989.

Remnants of the December 1989 plot regrouped in Tuguegarao for another attempt in March 1990, before making a final stand seven months later in Cagayan de Oro City.

Coup that never was

Rumors about military restiveness had been swirling around Manila for the good part of 1985. The rumors died down when Ferdinand Marcos, hoping to quash reports he was losing his strongman's grip, challenged the opposition to a snap election in October 1985. To give the opposition a chance against the controlled media, publisher Eugenia Duran-Apostol retooled her weekly news tabloid, the Philippine Inquirer, into a daily broadsheet.

The first issue hit the streets on Dec. 9, 1986. Two and a half months later, I would have my first crack at covering an aborted coup which morphed into the People Power revolution at Edsa.

Since most people did not hear a single shot fired from Feb. 22 to 25, the coup would be remembered more as a peaceful, people-powered revolution than a plot to assault Malacañang, oust Marcos and replace him with a junta.

Five months later, Marcos' allies declared a new government at the Manila Hotel. They gave up after 38 hours.

'God Save the Queen'

In November, President Aquino bared the "God Save the Queen" plot to unseat her. She also fired Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, the alleged patron of the plot.

The attempts started getting violent in 1987. Marcos loyalist troops seized Villamor Air Base and GMA Channel 7 in January that year.

In April, mutinous soldiers held a building in Fort Bonifacio. Wayward airmen tried to take over the then Manila International Airport in July, but the attempt was apparently a dry-run for the August plot, where over 2,000 soldiers led by Lt. Col. Gregorio Honasan seized Camp Aguinaldo and several other camps. The uprising that lasted 36 hours left 53 dead and more than 200 injured.

After a lull of more than two years, the rebels, now named the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa-Soldiers of the Filipino People-Young Officers Union—RAM-SFP-YOU—went back to business on Dec. 1, 1989. This was the worst coup attempt against Ms Aquino that came closest to succeeding.

Two T-28 planes and several helicopters flew over Camp Aguinaldo, dropping bombs and raining bullets on the buildings. Bits of dirt scattered as the bullets hit the ground at the parking lot across from the grandstand. Marine Gen. Rodolfo Biazon, a veteran of the Jolo and Lanao campaigns, stood by the half-open door of the dugout, calmly telling reporters crouching under the tables where not to hide.

Just like in the movies

Ratatatat … boom. Just like in the movies, I thought. A loud thud, boom. Something was hit. Which building? It sounded so near. Thud, boom. Thud, boom. A rocket hit Malacañang, a radio report said. Street fighting on Coastal Road, still came another report. Metro Manila was a war zone. On the phone, then INQUIRER editor in chief Dick Pascual said US planes were taking off for "persuasion flights." But it was still raining bombs and bullets outside. Somehow, the strafing stopped. We filed out cautiously from the dugout to survey the landscape. Dark smoke billowed from a building near the Logcom. Thick smoke rose from Camp Crame. But there were no soldiers rushing around with stretchers. And it was still daylight, just about 2:30 p.m.

Reports about rebel troops moving toward Camp Aguinaldo had the defense media on tenterhooks again by nightfall of the following day. Biazon ordered us to evacuate the dugout before midnight. Some stayed, but I moved to Camp Crame to link up with INQUIRER reporter Beth Pango at the press office, while colleague Dave Veridiano waited in another building.

Military spokesperson Col. Cris Maralit was worried. Situated near Edsa, the two-story press office was vulnerable to rocket fire. It was too dark and too dangerous to be walking outside. Just hide under the concrete staircase, Maralit advised us.

Beth and me, we sat there, smoking, laughing nervously as rebels and loyalist soldiers exchanged artillery fire in Camp Aguinaldo, where I had been just hours earlier. We felt the ground shake. We shuddered as the skies lit up with every blast. We wished for hot coffee. We also planned our coverage. The instruction from the office was to cover the events as they happened but to keep in mind that we had to angle stories toward the people-elected government.

By daylight, Beth would go to the hospitals to check on the casualties, while I returned to Camp Aguinaldo for an ocular on the extent of the damage.

Not over but...

The military "adventure," as the major players would have it, wasn't quite over—yet.

In Cebu, rebels wrested control of Mactan Air Base. In Makati City, mutineers seized hotels, condominiums and key buildings, shifting the coup's focus to the country's financial capital. They also asked President Aquino to step down. But having failed in their attempts to seize Malacañang, Camp Aguinaldo, Sangley Point, Fort Bonifacio, Villamor Air Base, it was clear defeat was at hand.

After formal negotiations, the mutinous Scout Rangers returned to their barracks in Fort Bonifacio.

Casualties

The coup that lasted seven days left behind 99 dead and 570 injured. Most of the casualties were civilians. Damage to property and losses in income were estimated at P1 billion.

To the INQUIRER, it was all in a day's work. But work with a passion and a mission.

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US Homeland Security poorly managed

WASHINGTON—NEARLY THREE YEARS AFTER President George W. Bush created the Department of Homeland Security after the Sept. 11 attacks, the sprawling agency still faces management problems that were partly to blame for the poor response to Hurricane Katrina, an internal audit showed.

In a report issued on Wednesday, the inspector general outlined a series of problems with the agency that was created in early 2003 in the largest reorganization of the federal government in 50 years.

Insp. Gen. Robert Skinner said Hurricanes Katrina in August and Rita, a month later, exposed weaknesses in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (Fema) information systems and its management of contracts and grants.

"When one considers that Fema's programs are largely administered through grants and contracts, the circumstances created by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita provides an unprecedented opportunity for fraud, waste, and abuse," the report said.

It said while Homeland Security was taking steps to manage spending for Katrina, the size of the response and recovery efforts created "an unprecedented need for oversight." The hurricanes highlighted problems at the top at Fema. Its former director, Michael Brown, initially praised by Bush for doing "a heckuva job" quit amid a hail of criticism over his agency's slow response to Katrina.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the senior Democrat on the House Committee on Homeland Security, urged department leaders to fix problems identified in the report.

"Poor leadership at the department and findings of fraud, waste and abuse at Fema tell me that our local communities are still being left in the dark," said Thompson, whose state was hit hard by Hurricane Katrina.

In a response attached to the audit, Homeland Security officials said the department had formed a task force to ensure financial controls were in place in the recovery effort. Homeland Security spokesperson Russ Knocke said reorganization at Fema was one of the department's top priorities.

"The American public will be hearing from us in short order about how we intend to build the capability of Fema into a 21st century agency with 21st century capabilities ... and restore the agency's core focus on response and recovery missions," he said on Thursday. Knocke said the department would detail the changes early next year. Some changes to Fema could include state-of-the-art communications equipment and improved capabilities to track emergency supplies—like through bar codes—in order to better distribute goods in an emergency.

As part of an effort to have Fema focus mainly on response and recovery, the department has also created a new preparedness directorate that will be responsible for consolidating all preparedness functions, Knocke said. *Reuters*

Al-Qaida threatens to kill hostages

DUBAI—AL-QAIDA IN IRAQ CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY for kidnapping five Sudanese Embassy employees in Baghdad, including a diplomat, and threatened to kill them within 48 hours, according to a statement and video posted on an Islamist website Thursday.

The group said it had "arrested five employees of the Sudanese Embassy in Baghdad, including 'diplomats'," in a statement signed by the al-Qaida branch, headed by Iraq's most-wanted man, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

"Al-Qaida in Iraq's Islamic court has decided to give the Sudanese government 48 hours to clearly announce it is breaking off diplomatic relations with the (Iraqi) government in the Green Zone, closing its Baghdad Embassy and withdrawing all its representatives" in Iraq, it added.

Baghdad's Green Zone is a highly fortified center which houses Iraqi government offices and the US and British embassies.

"Otherwise the government must assume responsibility for sacrificing its 'diplomats,'" added the statement whose authenticity could not be verified.

On Dec. 23, Khartoum said six Sudanese nationals, including the embassy's second secretary Abdel Monem al-Huri and four embassy employees, had been seized by unknown assailants while exiting a mosque in the Iraqi capital.

The sixth hostage, whom Khartoum had called "a friend" of one of the employees, was not mentioned by the group.

One of the five Sudanese who appeared in the video, who identified himself as the embassy's second secretary, asked his government to obey the kidnappers.

"I call on the Sudanese government to respond to the demands of the Iraqi resistance," he said. *AFP*

US journal to retract clone hero's article

WASHINGTON—THE US JOURNAL SCIence on Thursday said it would retract an article in which disgraced South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk claimed a major breakthrough in tailoring stem cells.

The journal said it had given all authors credited with working on the article, which appeared online in May this year and in the full journal in June, a deadline of Friday to sign a retraction.

"There is no question in our minds that the stem-cell paper published 19 May 2005 by the journal Science needs to be retracted," said Science's editor in chief Donald Kennedy in a statement.

"We are proceeding swiftly but appropriately in that direction," he said, adding that the journal had so far received no official notification of Seoul National University's findings which debunked Hwang's claims. "Retraction of a scientific paper is an editorial and bibliographic tool that is used to correct the permanent scholarly record, and it cannot be made based solely upon news reports."

"We continue to work with the authors on the wording of the retraction and obtaining the signatures needed for publication."

"We have given them a deadline of tomorrow, Friday, 30 December. If we have not received all of the signatures by tomorrow, Science will be moving toward running an editorial retraction, or one signed by the investigation committee itself, possibly after the final investigative report is issued."

Science has been caught in the crossfire of Hwang's steadily unraveling claims of stem cell research breakthroughs.

South Korean investigators on Thursday said there was no evidence to support Hwang's claim to have tailored stem cells to a patient, in what would have been a major step forward in fighting diseases like diabetes and Alzheimer's.

Hwang had said in the article his team of researchers had extracted material from cloned human embryos which matched the DNA of 11 patients.

Each of the new 11 stem cell lines was created by taking genetic material from the patient and putting it into a donated egg.

The panel said it was also looking into his other alleged achievements, including creation of the world's first cloned dog.

Investigators had said on Dec. 23 that much of the data in the paper he published this year in Science had been fabricated.

Hwang immediately tendered his resignation from the university. *AFP*

84 terror detainees on hunger strike

WASHINGTON—EIGHTY-FOUR suspects in the US-led 'war on terror' being held at prison in the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba are currently on a hunger strike, US military officials said Thursday.

The figure includes 46 detainees "that have refused nine consecutive meals since Dec. 25," read a statement from the US military's Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

"The number of detainees engaged in the current fast, which began on Aug. 8, 2005, routinely fluctuates," said the military. The number peaked in September, when 131 inmates were on a strike, according to news reports.

"Since then, increases in the number of fasters have coincided with the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the scheduled arrival of defense attorneys representing certain detainees." Hunger striking "is consistent with al-Qaida training and reflects detainee attempts to elicit media attention," and to bring pressure on the US government "to release them," the statement emphasized.

Guantanamo holds about 500 detainees, most of whom were captured in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001.

Since opening in January 2002, the prison has been the focus of controversy over the indefinite detention of suspects without charges or legal representation, as well as accusations of torture and detainee mistreatment. *AFP*

China bares third human bird flu death

BEIJING—CHINA ON Thursday announced the country's seventh human case of bird flu and third fatality from the H5N1 virus, state media said.

The victim was a 41-year-old factory worker surnamed Zhou in Sanming City in the eastern province of Fujian, Xinhua news agency said, quoting the ministry of health. She was hospitalized on Dec. 8 after showing symptoms of fever and pneumonia and died on Dec. 21.

Initial samples taken from her tested negative but further tests showed positive results for the H5N1 virus, Xinhua said, quoting a ministry report.

"Zhou has been confirmed to be infected with bird flu in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Chinese government," the ministry said, according to Xinhua.

People who had close contact with Zhou were under medical observation but none of them so far had shown any abnormal symptoms, it said.

The health ministry said no outbreak of bird flu had been detected among poultry in the area, Xinhua said, and there was no indication in the agency report of how she contracted the disease. *AFP*

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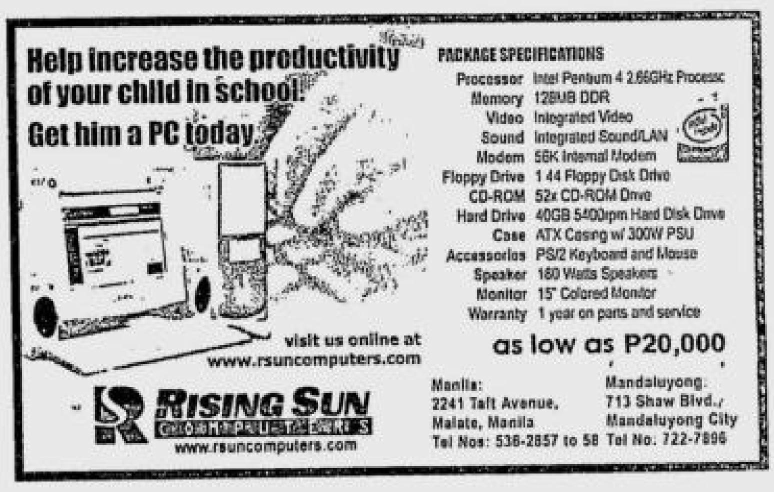
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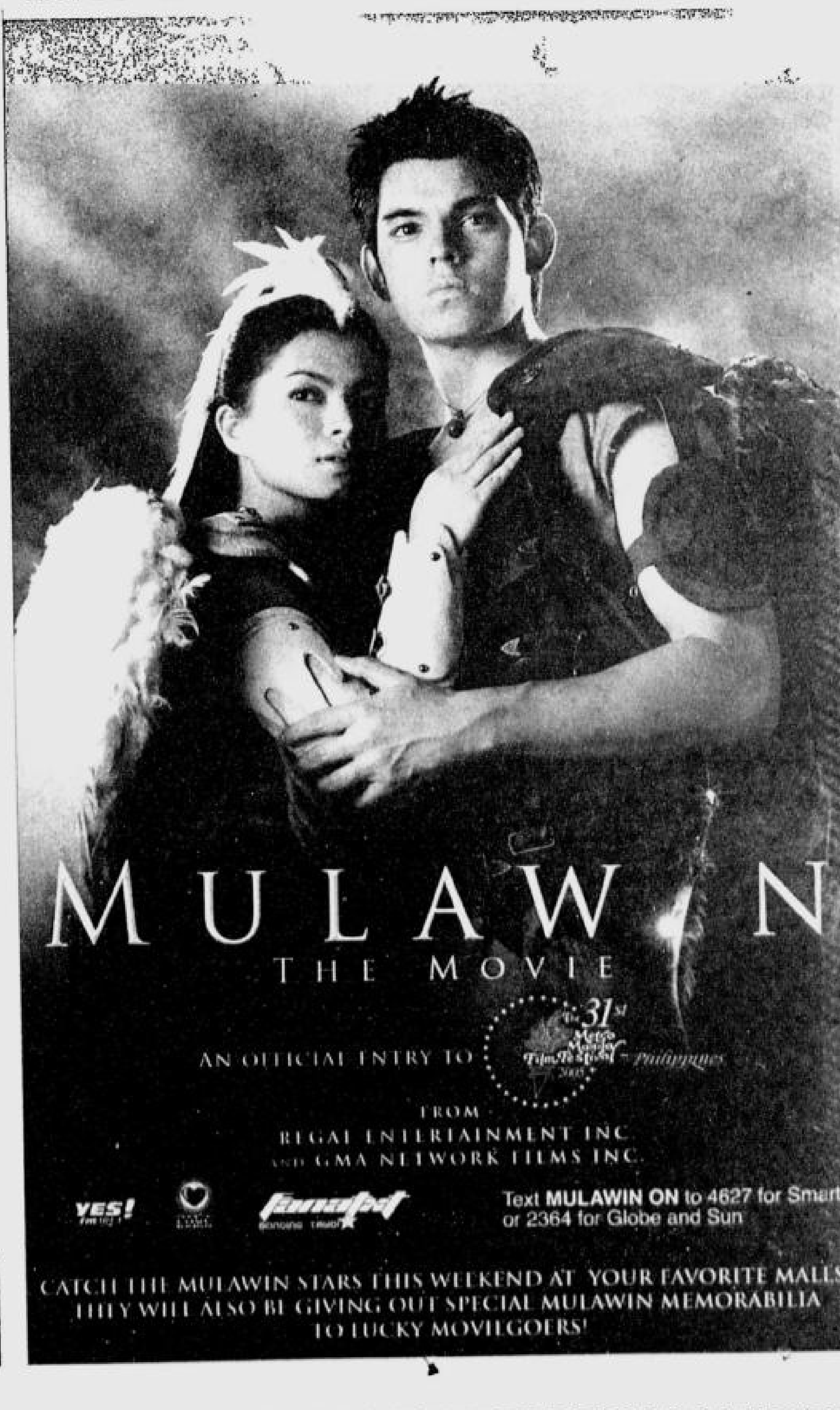
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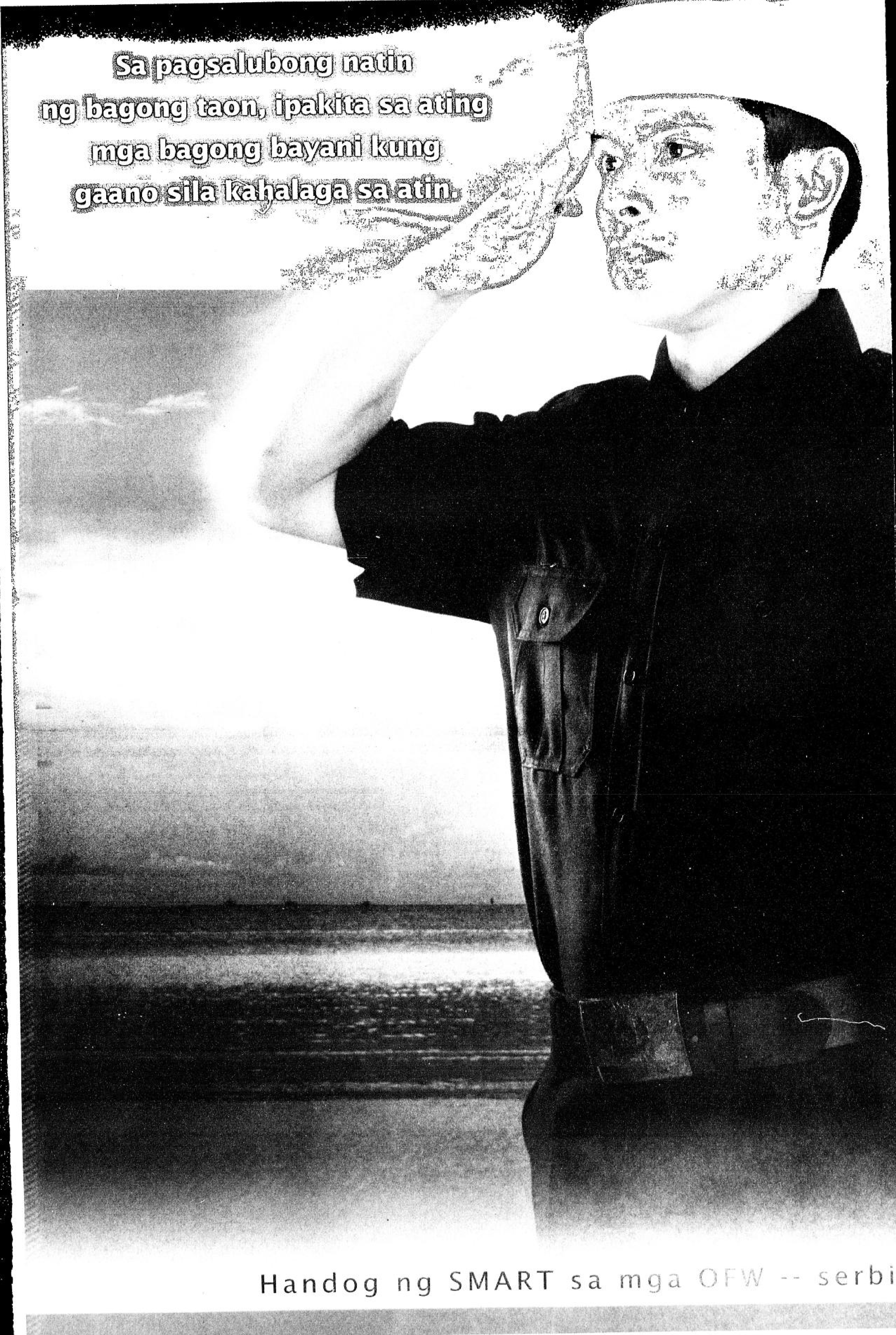

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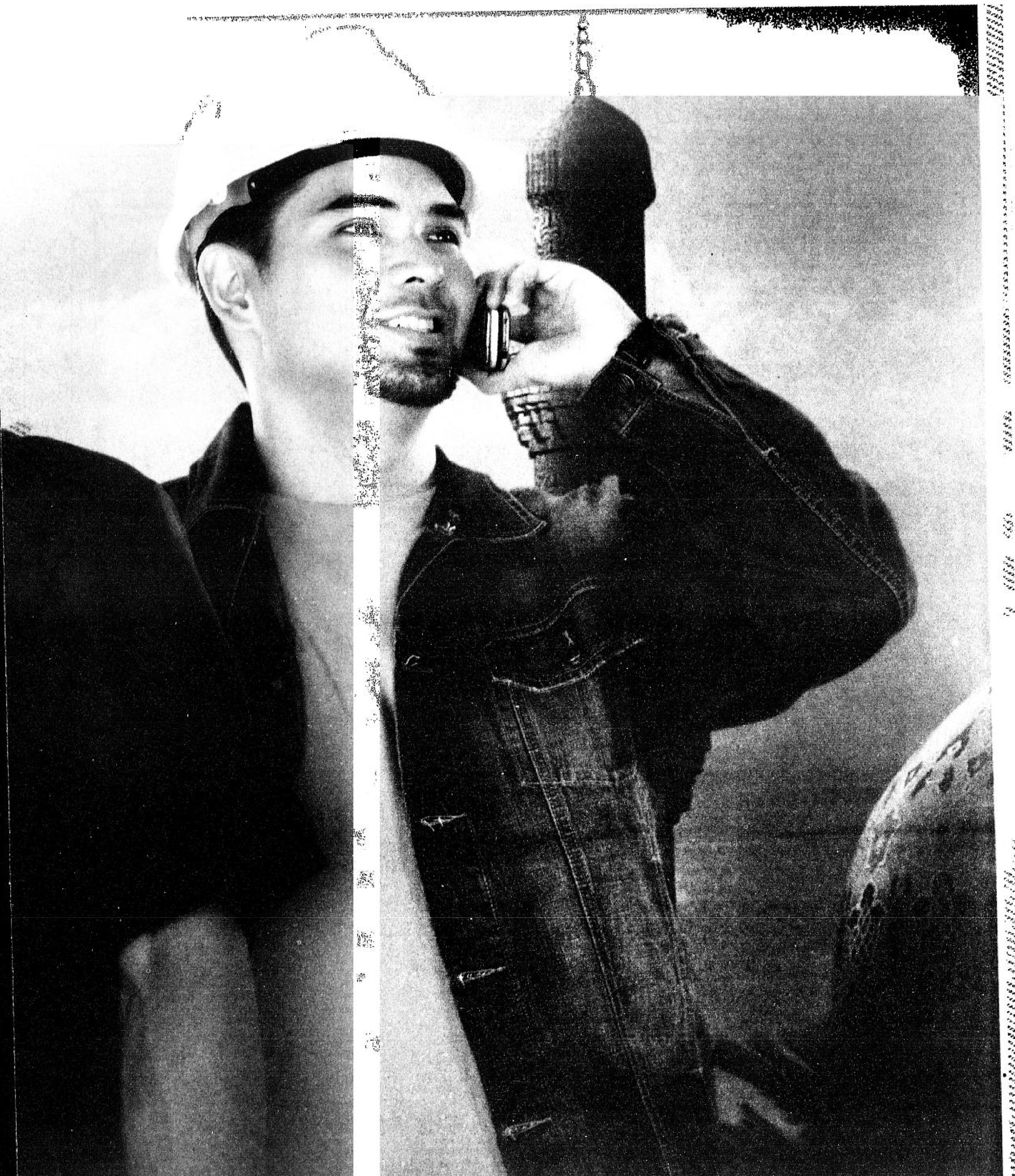

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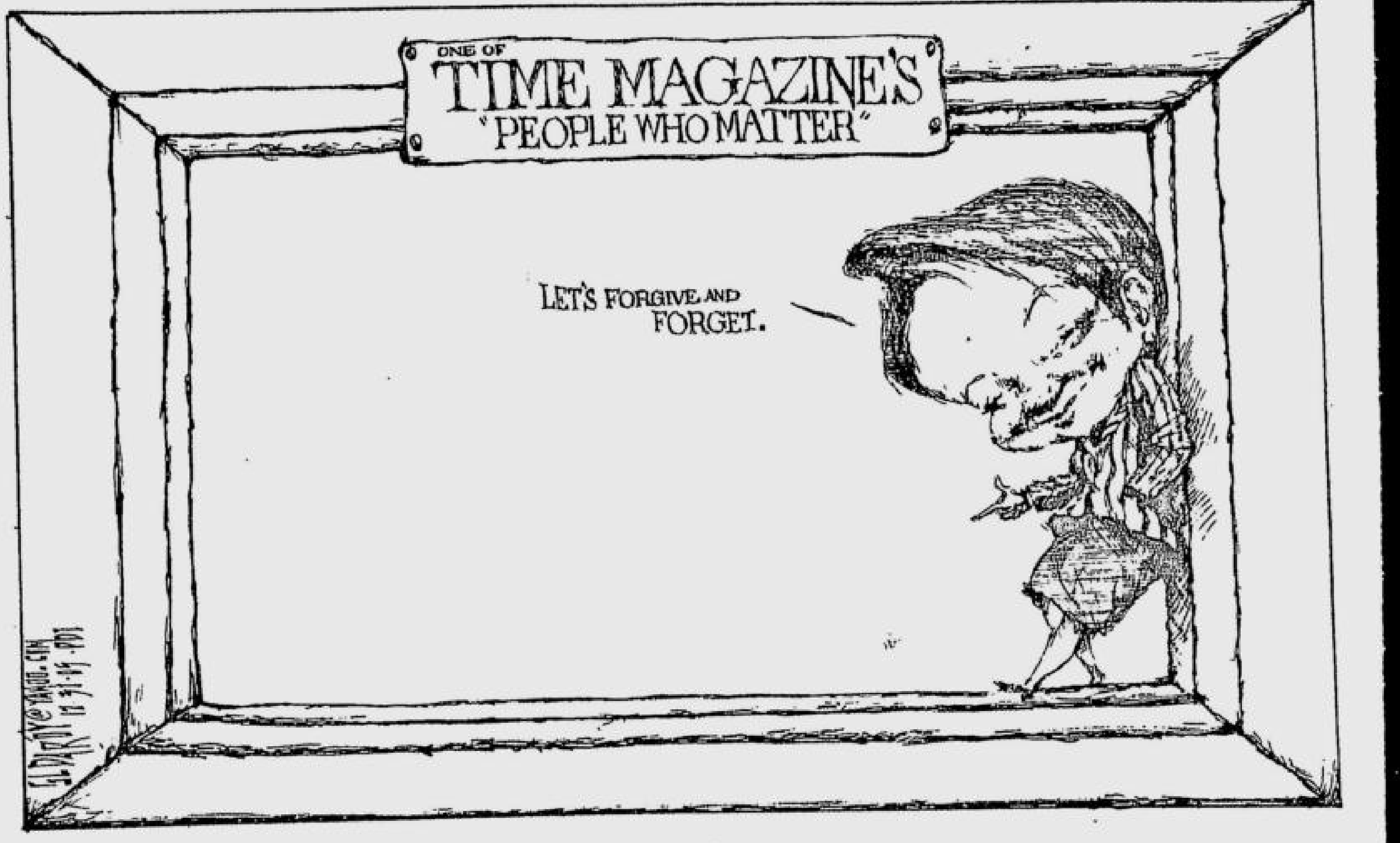


Risky revelry

EDITORIAL

IT MUST BE THE HARD TIMES (OR WE MIGHT HAVE become hard of hearing), but did we hear fewer firecrackers exploding in the merry season this year? If that's the case, it probably explains why authorities have reported fewer deaths and injuries from firecrackers, fireworks and firearms fired into the air so far. The Department of Health said that over a nine-day period starting Dec. 21, a total of 95 injuries caused by fiercrackers and other pyrotechnics were reported. Two men, however, died from ingesting the poisonous "watusi" and four others ended up in hospitals for the same reason. Eight other people were wounded by stray bullets.

The DOH noted that these casualty figures were a significant improvement from last year's, when 158 people suffered injuries caused by various pyrotechnic devices even before the noisy and bloody New Year's Eve celebration began. Two years earlier, the health department counted 136 cases of deaths or injuries due to pyrotechnics before the New Year, meaning there is no certainty the overall casualty figure will be smaller when Filipinos are done welcoming the year 2006 with a bang. In fact, some health officials fear not only that the number of injuries would rise but also that their injuries might be more serious since the firecrackers now being sold are more powerful than before.

Expectedly, the majority of those who are hurt by firecracker and other pyrotechnics are those those who handle these dangerous stuff directly. DOH records on last year's New Year revelry show that 56 percent of the 548 victims of firecracker explosions and burns, brought to hospitals, directly handled the pyrotechnics.

But the same statistic clearly shows that keeping one's hands off firecrackers and fireworks doesn't guarantee that one will begin the new year whole and healthy. In fact, 44 percent of those who got hurt by firecrackers, beginning on New Year's Eve last year, were mere onlookers or just passing by. Meaning that those who explode firecrackers or light fireworks are just as likely to hurt others as themselves. And if hurting others is not enough to prick the conscience of those who just have to light firecrackers, it might give them pause to know that one out of every four victims last year were children below 10 years old.

These are the grim statistics traditional revelers would do well to keep in mind tonight. Year after year, a time for merrymaking and celebration has turned into a day of death, injury and destruction. As the year ends, it is our fervent wish that observing a tradition doesn't end in tragedy for many.

Reverses and prospects

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THE YEAR ENDING TONIGHT HAD ITS UPS and downs, but the memories it will leave are less pleasant than better. The bad news was mostly shocking and sometime even staggering but it was thankfully tempered by some welcome news that made 2005 not completely desolate although barely acceptable. Its passing grade from this old professor's viewpoint is the mediocre 75 percent.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is like the messenger who was killed for being the bearer of the bad message. She is principally the source of the adverse reports about our government which certainly has been far from satisfactory. Many people are blaming her for the many serious problems that have escalated alarmingly under her watch. The accusing finger is pointed at her because she is the President of the Philippines.

The most serious charge against her was her alleged plot to falsify the election returns last year to give her an impressive victory. The basis of this allegation was the Garci tapes, recording her instructions to Virgilio Garcillano of the Commission on Elections. Authentic or not, the tapes heightened public suspicion of the legitimacy of her title. While admitting that she had indeed talked to Garcillano, she said it was merely a "lapse in judgment" and not an illegal act. Not many believed her.

Garcillano himself disappeared at the height of the investigation of the tapes and was reported to have fled to some foreign hideout. More than anyone else, it was President Arroyo who needed him to corroborate her defense, but she made no serious effort to locate him. This only gave rise to the conjecture that he was ordered to lie low for fear that he might inadvertently spill the beans during his cross-examination by the opposition.

In the end, the attempt to impeach her was blocked in the House of Representatives by loyal supporter influenced by her strong persuasions, political and otherwise. The rest of the nation was disappointed over the suppression of the truth, whatever it was. Garcillano's sudden appearance was anti-climactic and still evasive. But all was not lost last August. The mystery of the Garci tapes is not dead and buried and will rise again in the coming New Year.

Many other issues raised against her continue to plague her administration. To stalemate them, she issued the arrogant EO 464 prohibiting members of her Cabinet and other officials under her control from appearing without her permission before any legislative investigation. The Supreme Court has not yet decided the constitutionality of her open challenge to the Legislature in the exercise of its inherent and now express right of investigation. The executive officials are thumbing their noses at Congress while the high tribunal continues to deliberate after performing their rigodon at Chief Justice Davide's retirement party.

The Abueva Commission that the President created and gave an operating fund of P10 million (which it asked to be increased) has predictably recommended the replacement of the presidential system with a parliamentary government where she and her cohorts expect to remain in power. She is the foremost advocate of this change, which the commission merely made the motions of echoing as ordered.

One especially objectionable feature of the commission's proposal is the cancellation of the 2007 elections for the benefit of all elective officials whose terms will be extended until 2010. For obvious reasons, that useless body will probably be supported by the Lower House and some senators who will continue serving in excess of their present constitutional limit.

We can only pray that the sovereign people will be intelligent enough to recognize this shameful attempt to treat them as dimwits and angrily shoot it down as befits self-respecting citizens.

And what about the good news? Well, there's a trickling of it like the improvement of the peso, the crowning of our candidate as the new Miss International, the victory of Manny Pacquiao and two other boxers in the United States and of our athletes in the recent SEA games. But all this was not because of GMA's statesmanship, of course; the OFWs simply sent more money to their families this Yuletide, our athletes were better, and our Miss Precious Lara Quigaman was lovelier. No thanks to Ms Gloria although her sycophants are claiming credit for their boss.

She also chaired the UN Security Council last September, but this was because it was our country's turn to occupy that position which is rotated among the members in alphabetical order of their names. No big deal either.

The good news crowded by the depressing headlines in 2005 is that we have not lost hope for the year that will begin tomorrow. In fact, we are awaiting it with the traditional eagerness we have always displayed at every new beginning. The good news is that we are still undaunted despite the reverses we endured in this year that is ending at midnight. As the plucky Scarlett O'Hara said in Gone with the Wind, "Tomorrow is another day!" Let us pray it will be a brighter day every day throughout the whole New Year.

Good health, good cheer and good fortune to everyone in the year of our Lord 2006!

Our way to peace

COMMENTARY

Howard J.Q. Dee

WE BEGIN ANOTHER YEAR WITHOUT PEACE. Two generations of Filipinos have known no peace. Ours is a paradoxical society. Conflict and division seems to be a way of life for us but we are by nature a peaceful people. We value liberty and freedom but do not respect the rights of others, particularly the poor. We defend our rights to private property and enterprise but have no qualms about cheating to gain profit. We abhor tyrants but do not respect duly elected officials. Our rebels kill and destroy in the name of freedom and democracy while our politicians act like they are above the law they legislate. We live this life of contradiction which brings us this perpetual state of "unpeace."

What is the one root cause of all these manifestations of our unpeace? It is another contradiction: we worship an Almighty God but do not conform with divine law. Thus, we lose our sense of divine justice which leads to all forms of injustices and inequities.

Fr. Raneiro Cantalamessa, a preacher to the Pontifical Household, provides this diagnosis: "A general atmosphere of impunity is established in today's society, in which there are competitions to break the law, to corrupt and allow ourselves to be corrupted, with the justification that everyone does it. Is not this, in a certain sense, the situation in which we all live? One after the other, the commandments of God are calmly broken, with the pretext that everyone does it, that culture, progress and even human law now allow it. But God has never thought of abolishing the commandments or the Gospel, and this general feeling of security is no more than a fatal deception. There are those who console themselves, saying that the day of Christ's return is very far off, perhaps millions of years away. But from the Gospel, Jesus responds: 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you.' Now is the time for mercy, then it will be a time of justice. It is for us to choose, while we still have time."

The INQUIRER, in its Christmas message, challenged its readers to reexamine their faith, asking, "Does God have a plan for our country?" "Is Jesus coming back?" "What are we to do?"

God has a plan for every nation and every person. His plan for our country is certainly not what was described in the INQUIRER editorial last Dec. 27, "Slaughter of the innocents," depicting a nation of children suffering from various forms of social exclusion, exploitation and oppression, a malady, nay, an anomaly, which has spread to almost half of our entire children population of 30 million. One of every three Filipino children, 0-5 years, is underweight, under-height and stunted. Of these, 20 percent are wasting or bloating, condemned to a slow death. This blight is worse than any pandemic imaginable. Add to this our 17 million working children, the child rebel soldiers, child prostitutes, child prisoners and abandoned street children, and we see the contrary of what God had intended for our country. He came to give us His life that we may live abundantly, that our joy may be complete.

Is Jesus coming back to reclaim the world? During the Jubilee Year 2000, the late John Paul II said that the preparation for the New Advent was the defining point of his pontificate. He said: "The Great Jubilee cannot be a mere remembrance of a past event ... It is to be the celebration of a Living Presence and to look toward the Second Coming of Our Savior when he will establish once and for all His kingdom of justice, love and peace."

What are we to do then? Jesus said: "Be like men waiting for their master to return ... happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." Pope John Paul II adds: "Christians are called to renew their hope in the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God, preparing for it daily in their hearts..." The Lay Apostles of Jesus Christ the Returning King, following this advice, are preparing for Jesus' proximate return. See the website www.directionforourtimes.com. Pope John Paul II advised: "While waiting for Jesus' return in glory, we must live in hope as we build the kingdom which Christ will hand over to the Father."

How do we go about building this kingdom? Pope Benedict XVI showed us the way in his first World Day of Peace message. The first step, he said, is to seek the truth. "Whenever and wherever men and women are enlightened by the splendor of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace." The kingdom of peace must be founded on truth.

The second requirement is a thirst for justice: "The fruit of a (just) order has been planted in human society by its divine Founder which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for ever more perfect justice." We need to hunger for justice—restorative justice to heal the wounds of historical injustices, distributive justice to correct economic inequities, social justice to bridge social divides.

Third is for each person "to exercise the highest responsibility: that of conforming human history to the divine order. ... Everyone should feel committed to service of this great good; and should strive to prevent any form of untruth from poisoning relationships, by being transparent in their dealings with others, and to be faithful to their word."

If we follow these three simple steps, the Pope said, "we then learn to build peace on the truth of a daily life inspired by the commandment of love."

Love is the convergence point, the moving force—loving to the point of sacrificing self, dying for the cause of truth, freedom and justice. If we learn to love in this noble way, a new Philippines will surely emerge. The seed planted by our divine Founder, brought to life by the blood of our martyrs, Jose Rizal, Lorenzo Ruiz, Ninoy Aquino et al., need only to be nourished with our own labors. This is within our human power to attain, with God's grace. It is also our true national destiny that He has planned for us. If we believe this as truth and act with conviction, then His peace will descend upon us.

Howard J.Q. Dee is a former Philippine ambassador to the Vatican.

Pinoy child prodigy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

EARLIER I WROTE THAT MY RADIO PARTNER, Cecile Alvarez, and I wanted to have special programs of hope and cheer for Christmas and New Year. Last Christmas, we had Farida Tiongson and Bituin Hernandez, whose wheelchair-bound existence didn't stop them from being productive and independent, and actively promoting the welfare of their fellow disabled. For New Year's Day, we will air over dzRH at 9:15 p.m. the story of child prodigy Chino Sebastian Gutierrez, 15, as a special tribute to the Filipino youth whom Jose Rizal referred to as the hope of the motherland (catch Chino, too, playing with 26-year-old blind singer and concert pianist Carlos Ibay at the National Commission for Culture and Arts' "Ugnayan sa Tinig ng Bayan" on NBN-4 tomorrow, starting 1 p.m.). At a time when many Filipinos seem to have lost confidence in themselves as a people, owing to the shenanigans of our politicians, the fact that prodigious young talents abound in our midst is a source of hope and pride. This is the kind of message we want to convey when we commemorate the redeeming birth of the Christ Child.

* * *

We invited Chino's parents, Lamberto "Lambi" Borja Gutierrez and Maria Antonia "Bambi" Sebastian-Gutierrez, because we felt that prodigy is a family affair. What a story they have to tell.

I first heard of Chino five years ago from my old UP humanities professor, Sister Teresa of the Carmelites, who asked me very late in the day to "insert" Chino as an intermission number in a musical presented by Erda Technical-Vocational High School. Newly inaugurated President Macapagal-Arroyo would be present as guest, while German Amb. Herbert Jess would accompany the Erda kids on the piano. Sr. Teresa felt that playing even during the intermission would be the best way Chino could draw attention even as his family was trying to find a way to send him to Germany for his violin studies. Unfortunately, when he was about to play, a violin string broke and GMA didn't get to hear him because she had left by the time they got it fixed. But Chino caught the ear of Jess who helped him get to Munich. Today he attends regular high school there and at the same time takes violin lessons under renowned violin professor Dr. Jens Ellermann, who had trained world-class musicians such as Midori and Gil Shaham. (Chino practices 4 to 5 hours a day on his violin!) Ellerman has predicted that Chino will be a "star" and said that he would be "my last pupil; after him I will not teach anymore."

* * *

Earlier this month, Chino captured the hearts of local music lovers when he performed as the violin soloist of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Germany-based Prof. Oscar Yatco, in a special concert tribute to the maestro on his 75th birthday. The chance to play with Yatco was, said the 15-year-old boy, "a great honor." Critics praised his superb technical skill in his rendition of German composer Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor. But what impressed me as well was that this wisp of a boy played all the three movements entirely from memory. I marveled at this feat and he said that after reading a whole concerto two or three times he can play it by memory.

* * *

As his parents related it, Chino is adept in math, language and music, with the first two talents surfacing in infancy. He began nursery at the Community of Learners, where his mother, a UP psychology graduate, had earlier taught. But at the age of 2 1/2 years, Chino had already taught himself how to read. The family found this out accidentally when his grand-aunt, lawyer Rosalinda Sebastian, and some relatives were talking about the death of Betty Go Belmonte, Linda's friend. Chino suddenly piped in, "That's the president of Philippine Star." How did he know? "I read it in Star," he said.

They tested this incredible claim by asking him to read something else and summarize it, and he went on to do so.

At age 7, Chino began violin lessons under Coke Bolipata who recognized his talent instantly. I asked Bambi what could have triggered his interest in classical music. She recalled that whenever he was colicky as a baby, she would play some classical music. She also cited studies showing that gifted children tend to inherit their genes from their mothers, which drew a smile of a protest from her husband.

Actually talent comes from both sides of the family. Chino's maternal great grandmother is the first cousin of our first virtuoso, Ernesto Vallejo. His maternal great grandfather, Ambassador to China Proceso Sebastian, gifted Vallejo with a Stradivarius that he owned. Chino's grand-aunt Betty Sebastian is a well-known journalist and writer. His paternal grandfather, Fernando Gutierrez, was a renowned professor of micro-paleontology at UP.

* * *

At 11, Chino entered Philippine Science High School. Soon he was corresponding with Stanford University in California on a TV-offered course, and the impressed American officials told him he was welcome to study there. Despite her psychology training, "*nagugulat pa rin ako sa mga inilalabas ni Chino*," confessed his mom, whose elder son, Jose Miguel Gutierrez, 26, is also quite creative and gifted. When the chance for Chino to study in Germany came up, his parents didn't hesitate about packing up and accompanying him. Lambi left a good job as computer expert here.

Soon after his arrival in Munich, the Pinoy boy began beating his high school classmates in math. As a result he was chosen to represent his school in the city wide Math competition and later became the Math champion in the state of Bavaria. Interestingly, the contests were conducted in German, which the boy barely had time to study at that time. When I expressed amazement that he excelled in both math and music, he said this should not be surprising, since both call for precision. "Bach wrote very mathematical pieces," he said.

(To be continued.)

Symbol of hope

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"BABY HOPE" IS THE NAME GIVEN TO AN INfant girl born to a woman who had lost all her four children in last year's tsunami in India.

What makes Baby Hope's birth even more amazing is that hers is the first known birth in what the Associated Press calls "India's program to surgically reverse the sterilization of hundreds of mothers who lost their children" in the tsunami. "It is going to be a nice thing to see a baby grow up in these parts where we have seen so many children die," a local official in Bangalore told AP.

Agnes Raj, 26, gave birth earlier this month and named her daughter "Prateeksha," which means "hope" in the local language. That was also the name of one of her daughters lost in the tsunami. The baby, Agnes said, looks very much like one of her sisters and "whenever she and her husband look at her, they are reminded of that dead girl. So, while (the birth) has brought them joy, it has also brought them sad memories. (For them) it is more like bringing up the same child again."

Raj is one of at least 55 women in the area who had earlier undergone tubal ligation and then became pregnant after undergoing the reversal, paid for by the government. Officials said they hoped the birth of Baby Hope would convince other mothers who had undergone sterilization and then lost children in the disaster to come to government clinics to have their procedures reversed.

* * *

IT MUST be said at this point that reversing a tubal ligation is both an expensive and complicated procedure. Ligation involves cutting both fallopian tubes and then tying off or suturing both ends of each tube so that ovaries and sperm can no longer meet.

Ligation is considered a permanent method of family planning because it provides lifetime protection against an unwanted pregnancy. While reversal is still possible, it's more complicated and costly than the ligation itself, and there is no guarantee of a successful pregnancy afterwards. A woman's chances of having an ectopic pregnancy (where a fertilized ovum lodges in a fallopian tube rather than in the uterus) also increase after a reversed ligation.

This is why a couple or a woman should think long and carefully before choosing to undergo a ligation or a vasectomy, which is the counterpart procedure for men. Generally, it's recommended only for couples who are sure they already have the number of children they want, or who have made up their minds not to have children at all.

But what is one to do if, like Agnes, one's life path is disrupted by an unspeakable tragedy? Who would have thought, after all, that a wall of water would rise from the depths of the sea and take away all four of her children?

Changed circumstances may also make a woman consider reversing a tubal ligation, such as a second marriage or new relationship that kindles a desire for another child.

Whatever the reason, access to the technology and services that will allow for the reversal of a permanent procedure is also an element of reproductive health, as well a right that should be enjoyed by both women and men.

* * *

THE INDIAN government is to be commended, therefore, for offering the reversal procedure to mothers who lost children in the tsunami. There is, after all, no real health "emergency" involved, unless one considers the parents' state of mind and heart.

There is also something compelling about the idea that the birth of a baby could be, more than any other structure, monument or emergency assistance, a most potent symbol of hope and of meaningfully moving on after life has dealt you its harshest blows.

Baby Hope, I would imagine, serves up hope not just to her parents and extended family but to her entire community. There is more to recovery and rebuilding, after all, than new homes or buildings, roads and other facilities. Communities also need reasons to stay together and pull together in the face of hardship and pessimism.

I remember one community leader in a tsunami-devastated area declaring shortly after the tragedy that the worst thing about the post-disaster scenario was "the silence, the sound of children laughing that we have lost." Well, here's to the prospect of Baby Hope's arrival heralding not just laughter, but also renewal and rebirth all around her.

* * *

AND that, too, is my wish for all of us tonight, as we make the transition from the old year to the new.

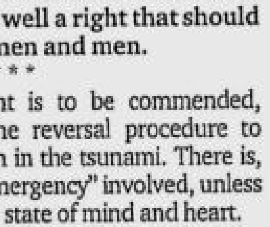
It's customary on this day to take stock and make plans, to look back at the past and begin anticipating the future, to discard the negative and focus on the positive. That's the point of all the fireworks we'll be lighting and discharging around midnight: to scare away ghosts of the past and pave the way for new beneficent spirits to bless our persons and our homes.

Here's a prayer that all of us realize that hope resides in more than pyrotechnics, superstitious rituals and holiday tables groaning with symbols of prosperity, from round fruits to fattening hams.

For the parents of Baby Hope, their families and neighbors, hope has come in the form of a baby whose birth has defied all odds.

What is your personal symbol of hope? Whatever it is, may you find it and celebrate it, acknowledge it and share it, with all the people you love, and with everyone who needs hope—the season's most precious and rarest commodity.

The changing times



SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

SINCE THE ANCESTORS OF PRESENT-DAY FILipinos did not have air-conditioned malls to do window-shopping or watch Hollywood blockbuster movies or choose from hundreds of restaurants to dine in, one of the grand entertainments of their day appears to have been religious processions. (Nowadays one seldom hears of friends joining processions, unless they are culturally inclined and thus are there to watch, not pray. Times change as do tastes.)

Aside from La Naval in October, the other great procession was that of Corpus Christi where the host was carried in the monstrance of the Cathedral. It was, we are told, a gem of inestimable value. During the earthquake of 1863 which occurred on the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi, the monstrance was buried under the rubble of the church, but it was recovered and repaired. Made of gold and decorated with diamonds of great size, it was already valued at P80,000 during the time of Archbishop Nozaleda.

"Excelsior" magazine describes the procession of Corpus Christi in 1907 as superior to that of previous years. At about 5:30, the religious cortege left by the principal door of the cathedral. The crowd of faithful, which followed the Santisimo with devotion and reverence, extending for several miles. Behind the standard of the cathedral marched the Catholic schools, the band of La Paz y Buen Viaje, banners, crosses, processional candelabras and commissions representing the parishes of San Miguel, Malate, Ermita, San Fernando de Dilao, Sampaloc, Quiapo, Sta. Cruz, Binondo and Tondo.

After them came the Marian congregations with their band and their standards, presided over by their PP Directors. El Apostolado de la Oracion ,(the Apostolate of Prayer) which sent the biggest delegation, marched in two large files, preceded by the director P. Foradada. They were followed by the banners of the Asociacion Josefina, La Correa, del Rosario and the V.O.T. de Santo Domingo and San Francisco.

The religious orders marched in this sequence: the Capuchins, the Recollects, the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans and Benedicts (where were the Jesuits?), followed by the seminarians of San Carlos. Behind the monstrance were the parish priests and the members of the Cathedral chapter, dressed in rich, white capes over their habits.

The magnificent monstrance encrusted with diamonds was carried by the apostolic delegate, Monsignor Ambrosio Agius, assisted by th ecclesiastical governor, the chief magistrate, and the prebend, Don Eulogio Sanchez. The posts of the canopy were borne by the members of Centro Catolico. At the end of the procession marched the president of the Consejo Superior of the Manila Diocese, the ex-presidents of this and other members who wore the insignias of the center.

When the Santisimo appeared at the door of the temple, the band in Plaza del Palacio played the royal march and the huge crowd that filled the surroundings of the cathedral fell on their knees as though impelled by coiled springs. It was a magnificent display, seeing the only true Majesty advancing triumphant among clouds of incense, symphonic melodies and the respectful silence of a nation prostrate in reverence.

The sacred procession traversed the streets of Postigo, Arzobispo, Anda, Magallanes, Beaterio and Cabildo in a demonstration of faith and piety before a numerous throng that filled the streets and plazas and the windows of the houses.

Altars had been erected in the atrium of San Ignacio, the gates of Sta. Isabel and San Jose and in front of Sta. Rosa College, where the procession would stop while the sextons of the Cathedral played special motets.

At 7 in the evening, the Most Blessed Sacrament returned to its holy temple after having traveled through the streets of the city. "Tantum Ergo" was sung and the archbishop gave his benediction, raising the monstrance over the heads of the crowd.

Honoring the religious sentiments of the country, Compania de Tranvias Electricos suspended its service in Intramuros during the event.

In the same manner that processions appear passé today, so too are pilgrimages to Antipolo. But even at the turn of the 20th century, commentators were already observing that the crowds were smaller than in previous years but there were still those who would go out of devotion, others out of curiosity and for entertainment although for most it was religious fervor that impelled them.

The road from Taytay leading to Antipolo was chock-full of *carretelas* alternating with the carromatas, but there were many who out of devotion or necessity went on foot, defying both the sun and the heat. In Antipolo, houses were converted into uncomfortable hotels because more guests were accepted than there was room due to the influx of visitors. The convent was by tradition transformed into an inn that was free fot those who couldn't or didn't want to pay. Persons of all social classes coming from different points and wearing native costumes passed through the almost impassable streets. The women came in *mestiza* dress and the men in *camisa chino*. Every one was virtually obliged to wear these, but the custom was bound to disappear because of the inconvenience.

Though the devotion to the Virgin of Antipolo was still popular, different influences and practices would begin to erode old customs and traditions. With globalization in our midst today, how many more of these old traditions will fade from memory and practice?

***

Wishing you all the best of times in the New Year. May the Lord bless and keep us safe from harm. A Happy and Prosperous 2006!

My 24 red candles

YOUNG BLOOD

Andrew Benedict Sy

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

CAKES ARE BEST SERVED CHILLED, I THOUGHT, AS I waited for my turn at a Red Ribbon outlet. Tapping my left foot in impatience, I tried to distract myself by listening to an argument developing in front of me.

The man, a stout fellow with cheeks flushed and both hands on his waist, was pleading his case once more: "Miss, I want 16 little red candles."

The answer was the same as before: "Sir, we are running short of little candles. Will you settle for one big one and six small ones?"

With a loud sigh of exasperation, the man silently nodded as his vision of perfection crumbled. Looking over his enormous shoulders, I caught a glimpse of the source of the problem. Lying on the immaculate counter was a little piece of heaven I have known since my childhood days. On top of three layers of chocolate cake lay the scrumptious ivory icing swirling in rhythm to pieces of cherry and chocolate shavings. The black forest cake sat on an intricately designed napkin and emblazoned on its surface in bright crimson letters were the words: "Happy Birthday, My Little Angel, From Daddy and Mommy."

Smiling secretly, I thought of how sweet the gesture was and how long it was since I last wanted one. In my case, the magic of birthday cakes died at about the same time I discovered that Santa Claus was a thin guy, who wears glasses and loves music.

On my way home, my thoughts wandered to the last thing I ever wished for on my birthday: a motor boat operated by remote control. I never got it although I did everything I was supposed to do: I closed my eyes when I made my wish, and I never told a soul what I wished for.

As I was being tossed around inside the jeepney, I tried to focus on anything other than my aching posterior. A classmate was throwing an "I-passed-the-board-party" and the night was full of promise. After meeting in our special *barkada* place, we all went to the party together. We were fashionably late and found the party in full swing. The place was a cacophony of familiar and unfamiliar voices.

The first wave of "Happy Birthday" greeting came around the time I was finishing dinner. Spreading like dengue during a rainy season, everyone knew about it by the time I had dessert. Looking at the faces of my closest friends, I knew that I had been betrayed by the people I trusted most.

The party died a natural death about midnight. After the goodbyes and thank you's to the blooming hostess, I checked my wallet, anticipating what was coming next. Then I heard the chants of "Libre! Libre! Libre!" When I asked what they wanted to do, they cheered.

We ended up in a karaoke bar somewhere in Eastwood. After a round of drinks, many minutes of conversation and tons of laughter, we began waking the dead. The classics were our first victims, including our own version of "Bridge Over Troubled Water." The massacre continued to include more recent hits from Gary V to Michael Learns to Rock. Amid the mayhem and the laughter, I found myself thinking of the birthday cake and had a sudden urge to make wishes.

I got home at 3 a.m., high on an overdose of friendship and began listing down my wishes. Since it seemed unfair that a one-year-old would have the same number of wishes as me, I decided to have as many wishes as there were candles on my imaginary birthday cake.

Candle 1: I wish we would stop complaining about the things we don't have and start being thankful for the things we have.

Candle 2. I wish cotton-candy clouds, fairies, elves and fanciful unicorns existed in the hearts of those whose candles far exceed mine in number.

Candle 3. I wish people had two voices, so that not only the mind would be heard, but the heart as well.

Candle 4. I wish we would stop wearing masks to hide our imperfections. Our weaknesses remind us that we are human, and conquering them defines who we are.

Candle 5. I wish people would stop dwelling on the "what" and try to understand the "why" of things.

Candle 6. I wish I wouldn't see another "gentleman" offer his seat to a pretty young lady standing at the opposite end of the LRT coach instead of to the slightly overweight single mom standing in front of him.

Candle 7. I wish I could refrain from laughing at other people, but instead laugh with them.

Candle 8. I wish people would smile when they are really happy and cry when they are sad, instead of doing the opposite.

Candle 9. I wish everyone would learn to enjoy more of the things life has to offer.

Candle 10. I wish for a pill that cures indifference, the epidemic that hits countries besieged by problems.

Candle 11. I wish people would stop using religion and faith as an excuse to be lazy and remain unproductive, bearing so many children who will do their work for them.

Candle 12. I wish we would stop blaming the politicians for all our current predicament but instead look a little closer to home. Who voted these politicians to power anyway?

Candle 13. I wish everyone would stop treating memories, morals, responsibilities, virtues and philosophies like trendy clothes—something to put on when they are still "in" and discard when they're no longer fashionable.

Candle 14. I wish for the most sought-after wish of all: more wishes. (Hey, I felt I needed to try.)

Candle 15. I wish for a world free from the gigantic walls we built around ourselves, the walls of sexism, racism and other isms.

Candle 16. I wish for money, since financial freedom means more time to pursue passions and dreams.

Candle 17. I wish I won't see another soul cry again just because a person dear to him/her forgot how we are all connected. People are like pebbles in a lake—when you move, you send out ripples that are felt by others, specially the ones closest to you.

Candle 18. I wish men would act like men instead of animals. As the old Filipino saying goes: "*Madaling maging tao, mahirap magpakatao.*"

Candle 19. I wish I could get back all the days, hours and minutes I have wasted on useless things.

Candle 20. I wish people would find the strength to help themselves before they ask for help from others.

Candle 21. I wish I would spend more time doing things than dreaming them.

Candle 22. I wish for a magical machine that transforms useless things to valuable ones, like tears to acceptance, regrets to treasured memories, sorrows to epiphanies and hate to unconditional forgiveness.

Candle 23. I wish for a cell phone that beeps each time I take something for granted, to remind me of the things that are truly important. It should also have an unlimited memory, so that I would never have to delete another "Thank you," "How are you?" and "Take care."

Candle 24. I wish I could fly, leap into tall buildings, shoot lasers from my eyes and have the strength of a thousand men, without having to wear that blue spandex suit and crimson underwear. (That's just me exercising wish No. 9.)

As the the pyramids were built one brick at a time, I plan to make my wishes come true, one candle at a time.

Andrew Benedict Sy, 24, finished BS Architecture at the University of Santo Tomas. He placed 6th in the architectural boards last January.

Export Pinoy Christmas

I WAS SADDENED TO READ CONRAD DE Quiros' Dec. 21 column, which noted that Christmas songs are not being played in Manila nowadays as much as it was in the past, this time of the year. (PDI, 12/21/05) For me, Christmas in the Philippines is such a special time because Filipinos start observing the season in September, and the cheapest way to do that is to play Christmas songs.

When my British husband experienced his first Filipino Christmas, he couldn't believe how much effort the Filipinos exert in celebrating the season in spite of the hardships they face. The food, the songs, the sharing, the smiles and most importantly the lights! In all the years I've been away from the Philippines, I have never come across another place that celebrated an occasion with such enthusiasm and originality. I've always been proud about that.

Filipinos should package Christmas and export it to other countries. There is nothing quite like a Pinoy Christmas!

—NORRIE BLACKEBY,
norrieblackeby@yahoo.co.uk

What is banned by the Ottawa Treaty

MAY I MAKE SOME COMMENTS ON A news story titled "NPA land mine kills Army major, lieutenant." (PDI, 12/17/05)

1. The story says "At least three soldiers, including a major and lieutenant, were killed in a land mine explosion set of by communist rebels in Tulunan, North Cotabato on Friday [Dec. 16] morning, the military said.... The casualties were on a six-by-six truck hit by the explosion according to [Col.] Pabustan."

One question to pursue is whether the soldiers were killed by the land mine explosion or by rifle fire as often happens in NPA (New People's Army) ambuscades that are initiated with a land mine detonation against military vehicles. This information can be gleaned from the autopsy/medico-legal reports on those who were killed. If they were killed by the explosion, this shows that the anti-vehicle mines had "direct anti-personnel effect."

2. According to the story, "Col. Ruperto Pabustan, commander of the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade based in Carmen town, said troops from the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion were on their way to a medical mission when one of their vehicles hit a land mine in Barangay Nabundasan around 10 a.m."

To say "hit a land mine" implies the mine was contact- or impact-detonated, not command-detonated. This should be verified because the CPP-NPA has said it uses only command-detonated land mines. The latter would presumably be the case if explosive remnants, like an electric detonating cord, were recovered from the scene. It would be good to also get the concerned NPA unit's statement on the incident.

3. The story ends by saying: "The Ottawa Protocol in 1996 has banned the use of this type of weaponry because it kills people even after wars have ceased."

First of all, it is the Ottawa Treaty of 1997. Secondly, the quoted statement could be misleading because the sentence preceding it in the story refers to command-detonated land mines—which are not banned. What is banned by the Ottawa Treaty are victim- or contact-detonated anti-personnel mines. And thirdly, the essential or main reason for the ban is that these are inherently indiscriminate weapons that do not distinguish between combatants and civilians, during and after wars.

—SOLIMAN M. SANTOS JR.,
coordinator, Philippine Campaign
to Ban Landmines, 18 Mariposa St.,
Cubao, Quezon City

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Truth, justice before peace, progress

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE LETTER titled "One hell of a great woman" that appeared in the Dec. 15 issue of the INQUIRER. The problem with some people is that they keep saying things which completely contradict their thinking. How can we abhor cheating if we don't deal with the fact that the legitimacy of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency is under a cloud of doubt?

She has only herself to blame for this. We saw how she masterfully railroaded the killing of the impeachment complaints with all sorts of political accommodations struck with her minions in the House of Representatives. She could have opted to face the impeachment trial to clear her name once and for all, as well as the doubts about her victory in the 2004 elections.

Though everyone is entitled to his/her own opinion, I beg to disagree with the letter-writer that we should set aside all our political beliefs for the sake of the nation, never mind if there really was cheating, though the worst in our history, in the last elections.

Today's disunity among Filipinos persists precisely because of the unanswered questions about the illegitimacy of the Arroyo regime. To achieve peace and progress, it is imperative for GMA to adhere to true democratic principles and make a supreme sacrifice by stepping down. It is just right for all concerned to contribute his/her share, no matter how small, so that truth and justice will prevail. Only then can we talk about peace and progress.

—BEN DIEGOR, bendiegor@yahoo.com

Cowardly oblation

LAST DEC. 15, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines once again watched members of a fraternity perform the "ritual of streaking" inside the UP Campus. The ritual seems to have become an annual tradition. But the event this year differed from those held in the past: two women joined the group as a statement for the "equality for women."

We have been made to understand that this ceremony is done to celebrate the spirit of academic freedom symbolized by the UP Oblation, the statue of the male specie standing erect—without shame, head high, and naked—in front of the Quezon Hall, in search of truth and knowledge.

Since time immemorial, the naked human body has been unexcelled as an object and work of art. In Ancient Greece, athletes competed with one another wearing nothing but their birthday suits. Warriors, from the time of Achilles to Alexander, trained in the nude. In the Greek academe, Sappho was a mentor to youthful naked girl students.

Indeed, the beauty of the human body has even defied the prudishness of the Church. Witness, for instance, the Sistine Chapel adorned with men and women in various degrees of nudity.

But the story of Creation seems to spoil the fun. Adam and Eve, having eaten the forbidden fruit, appear wearing fig leaves on their way out of Paradise. I think it was before martial law that an overzealous head of the postal office banned the mailing and distribution of the photos of "Venus de Milo" coming out of the sea, full of light and splendor—on the ground that the poor lady was not covered even by a fig leaf!

Nowadays, countries with different cultures treat the bare human body differently. In the United States, bikini is the usual swimming outfit for women. In the Middle East, ladies who go to the beach should not reveal an inch of skin above their ankles. In Europe, however, Donau Park in Austria and the Elbe banks in Germany virtually become nudist camps during summer. So is the long stretch of beaches from Nice to St. Tropez in the South of France, in Italian Riviera, and in Bondai beach of Australia. Sao Paolo, of course, has exhibited various degrees of dishabille during its celebration of the Mardigras.

So, to each his own. In the Philippines, Maria Clara displays her belly-button at noontime TV shows—where kids, their *yayas* and *lolas* are tickled to the bones by the likes of "Spaghetti Pataas, Spaghetti Pababa," and "Sex Bombs, Sex Bombs."

But the latter-day devotees of the UP Oblation are cowardly. While Oblation itself proudly displays its body—erect, head high without shame—in the search of truth and knowledge, its devotees do their thing by running, faces covered with masks or paint. They are merely "streaking"—unsure of how to confront the future.

—NELSON D. LAVIÑA,
ambassador (Ret.),
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Pangako para sa Pangarap
Tenk yu...
Tenk yu...
Ang babait ninyo?
Tenk yu?

UNICEF would like to thank everyone for sharing and giving support to our Pangako para sa Pangarap Program. Through your monthly donations, children in need are given the best gift they could possible get this New Year – hope for a brighter future and a better life through education, better healthcare and protection from exploitation and abuse. For those interested to give this promise of hope, call the UNICEF Hotline today at 758-1000, or visit www.unicef.org/philippines.

May your generosity enrich your lives, as it has touched theirs, in the true spirit of the season. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

IPO5L-INQ-TY-123105

unicef Pangako para sa Pangarap

InqBox
Text na kayo!

Question of the Week

As the new year begins, what's your message to the politicians?

Check out our readers' views on Tuesday's **INQBOX**

Key in inquirer box name/age/city/message. Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart). (Maximum of 160 characters)

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Across the NATION

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Cop exec orders probe of shootout

By Luige A. del Puerto

CARAGA POLICE DIRECTOR CHIEF SUPT. RENE Elumbaring has ordered a quick and thorough investigation of the shooting incident Thursday that killed two policemen and three Army soldiers in Surigao del Norte.

The five died after they shot it out inside a passenger bus in Barangay Timamanan in Tubod town in Surigao del Norte. Police officials described the incident as a sad case of mistaken identity.

"We're still investigating, but it's very likely they mistook each other for the enemy," Surigao del Norte provincial police chief Senior Supt. Celso Coritana yesterday said on the phone.

"All were seated at the rear of the bus. They might have been feeling each other out, but no one never bothered to ask whether they were government forces or not," Coritana said.

He added: "All the passengers, the driver and the bus conductor did not hear the slightest argument between the two groups. What they heard was a burst of gunfire."

Investigation showed that Police Officers Joel Alfanta, Reoul Bongolto and Emmanuel Casiño had flagged down the passenger bus in Bad-as, Placer town around 12 noon and sat at the back. Private First Class Romel Ananas and Roderik Cacas, members of the 20th Infantry Battalion based in Samar province, were inside the bus, which was on its way to Butuan City from Surigao City.

When the bus reached Barangay Timamanan some five minutes away from where the policemen had boarded, a burst of gunfire jolted the passengers.

"No one [claimed] to have seen what or how it exactly happened. But the passengers did not hear any argument," Coritana said.

Both sides must have mistaken each other for communist rebels, since they all carried guns and wore civilian clothes, officials said.

Elumbaring said the three civilian-clad policemen, members of the regional mobile group, each armed with .45 caliber pistols, were on an official mission when the firefight with the two soldiers, who were then on a break, took place.

In Metro Manila, police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil called it "a very unfortunate incident." *With a report from Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Sorsogon, Albay protesters want Lafayette out of Albay

RAPU-RAPU, ALBAY—ANTI-mining protesters braved strong winds, rain and the rough seas of the Pacific Ocean to demonstrate their strong opposition to the continued operation of the Lafayette Mining Corp. here.

Packed in huge motor launches, the protesters composed of fishermen, women, students, senior citizens, church people, members of progressive organizations, local officials, teachers, media men and even children departed at 7 a.m. Wednesday from three assembly points at Barangay Manlabong, Prieto Diaz, Poblacion, Bacon and Sorsogon City and Barangay Poblacion here.

After an hour and a half of dizzying travel, the placard- and streamer-bearing demonstrators gathered at the sea in front of the seaport being operated by Lafayette.

They took turns assailing the company, which was being blamed for the toxic contamination that caused fish kills and triggered a fish scare in Albay and Sorsogon.

Rogelio Corpuz, general manager for operations of Lafayette Polymetallic Inc., told the INQUIRER that they welcomed the challenge posed by the ralliers.

"They must weigh and consider that we're under the laws and recommendations imposed on us by the government through the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau. We're working and responding to this issue in accordance with the law," he said.

"Right now, operations are still suspended and we're also waiting for the final study or findings of the independent monitoring team formed by the MGB," Corpuz said.

Councilor Alex de la Cruz and Fr. Lino Bugaoisan, known demonstrators from Rapu-Rapu, Albay, bared sad stories of families who now could barely afford to have three meals a day as there were no buyers of fish caught around the island.

De la Cruz said they were considering declaring a state of calamity so that the local government could use its calamity fund to help more than 60 percent of the population affected by the fish scare.

Mayor Benito Doma of Prieto Diaz, who initiated the move together with Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee, said a bigger "fluvial protest" was being worked out to strengthen their position to oust the Australian-based multinational. *Bobby Q. Labalan and Gil Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

ANTIMINING protesters brave the rough seas of the Pacific Ocean to demonstrate their strong opposition to the continued operation of the Lafayette Mining Corp. in Rapu-Rapu, Albay.
BOBBY Q. LABALAN/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

70 families rescued in Aurora

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—AT least 70 families stranded on their rooftops in Barangay Esperanza in Casiguran, Aurora, were rescued on Friday as floodwaters, which reached 10 feet high on Wednesday, continued to subside amid improved weather, a police official in the town said.

Casiguran police chief Insp. Protom Guevarra said policemen and volunteers evacuated at least 200 families in Barangays Esperanza, Culat and Tabas on Thursday afternoon when strong rains in the area stopped.

The 24 villages of Casiguran, the worst hit among Aurora's eight towns, remained flooded, according to Danilo Nieva, chief of the provincial disaster coordinating council (PDCC).

Nida Coralde, municipal social welfare chief in Casiguran, said waters in the villages of Esperanza, Culat, Tabas, Lual, Calangcuasan and Marikit were still four feet high on Friday.

Some 300 families have evacuated to the town hall. Most victims have stayed with their relatives on higher grounds, Coralde said.

Nieva said Dipaculao, Casiguran and Dilasag continued to be isolated as landslides rendered the road leading to these towns impassable. Travel via the Pacific Ocean remained unsafe due to big waves since Dec. 27, he said.

At least 70 people bound for the three towns and stranded in the capital town of Baler were housed and fed by the provincial government, he said.

Guevarra said at least three children in Barangay Estevez in Casiguran were reported missing since Dec. 23.

Casiguran Mayor Reynaldo Bitong said the floods, the worst that hit Casiguran after Typhoon "Harurot"'s rains in July 2003, came as the Amro, Minanga, Dibet, Bianoan and Calabgan rivers overflowed.

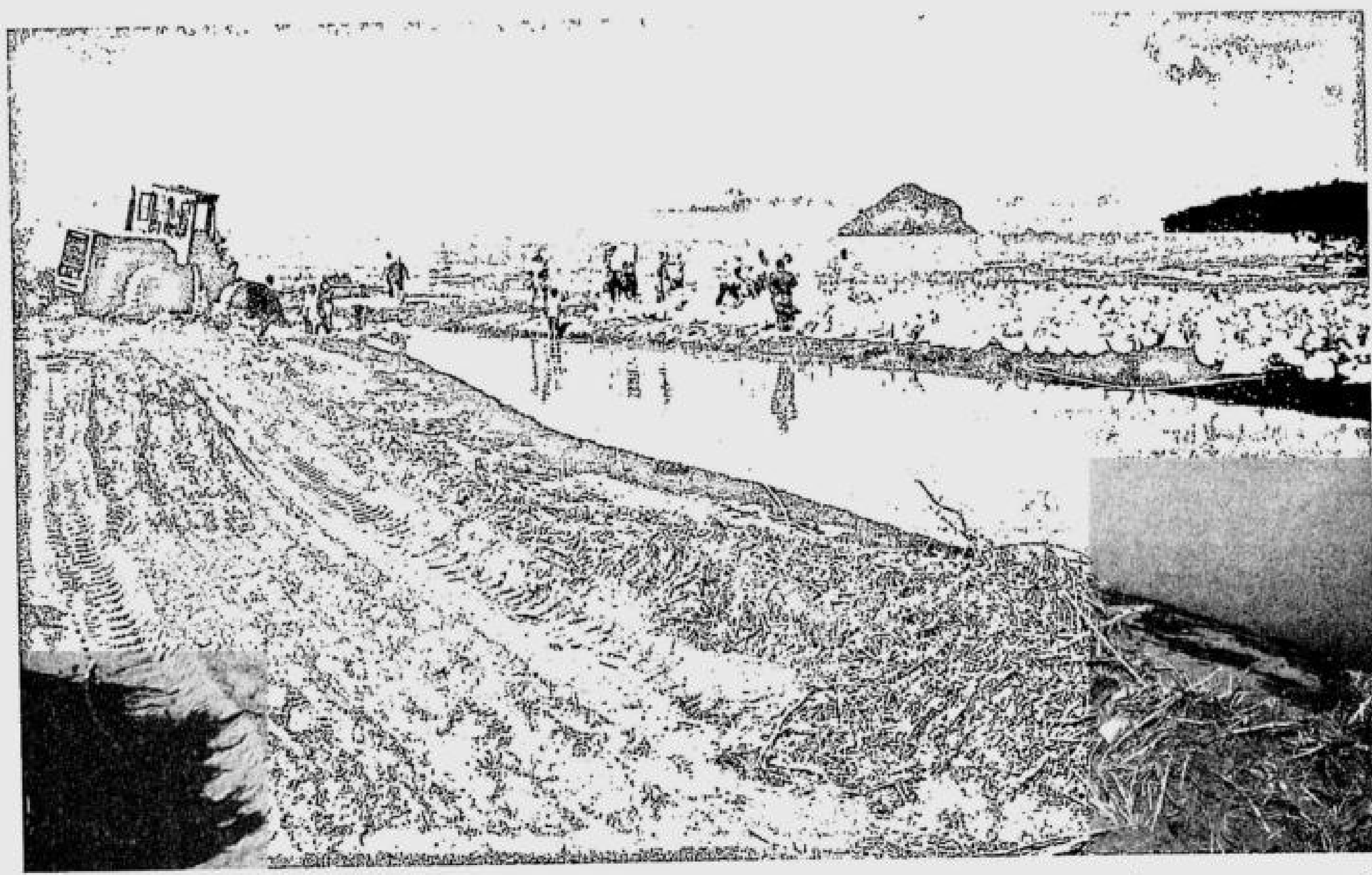
Bitong said this indicated that the watersheds had failed to hold much water due to corporate and illegal logging.

The town council had yet to declare the town under a state of calamity pending an assessment of losses in agriculture, infrastructure and property, he said.

In Isabela, at least 109 villages in 11 towns were hit by floods spawned by continuous rains in the province from Dec. 27 to Dec. 29.

PDCC reports said floods submerged villages in the capital town of Ilagan, Cauayan City and the towns of Reina Mercedes, Cabatuan, Naguilian, Gamu, Tumauini, Delfin Albano, Santo Tomas, Santa Maria and San Pablo.

Officials of the Magat Dam in Ramon ordered the opening of four spill gates in the dam. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*



MARCIANO T. VIROLA JR./PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

VOLUNTEERS prepare sandbags in Suqui Beach, from where they will be transported to Bucayao River to serve as a temporary line of defense against possible floods.

Calapan folk to fight floods with sandbags

CITY OF CALAPAN—TO MITIGATE possible floods in the coming days, the local government and the people of Calapan will use sandbags to serve as temporary protection while the earth dike awaits repair and the other more permanent engineering measures have not yet been started.

In a forum organized by the Rotary Club on Wednesday, Mayor Carlos Brucal announced the city government of Calapan was launching Oplan Sandbag which will involve preparing 400,000 sandbags that can stretch to 700 meters beside the river in place of the damaged protection dike.

He said volunteers have been tapped for the operation with government employees, including department heads, being asked to help.

The National Food Authority has contributed 125,000 sacks for the sandbagging, the center of which will be Barangay Suqui.

Volunteers have started filling sacks with sand from the beach Friday and loading them into trucks that will transport the sandbags to the Bocayao River.

The long-term solution to the flooding problem, however, lies in a series of engineering measures to be implemented by the provincial and city governments.

Gov. Arnan Panaligan said that if good weather continued, the repair of the dike could be carried out and construction of more permanent structures started.

He said a 600-meter dike will be constructed to seal off the water being diverted from Magasawang Tubig (Aglubang and Ibolo Rivers) to Bucayao River.

The P66-million dike will be funded and might also be implemented by the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Citing a letter of Secretary Eduardo Ermita to the National Disaster Coordinating Council, Panaligan said the provincial government was advised that the fund was already approved for release by the national government.

"Our flood control plan consists of a series of engineering measures and not just one," said Panaligan.

For the immediate measures, he said the 1.2-km protection dike in Bucayao will be restored farther from the river with 16 hectares of farmlands already purchased for this purpose.

The restoration would cost P8 million and will be funded and implemented by the provincial government.

The National Irrigation Administration will also put up gabions or rocks on the dikes.

The river will also be rechanneled to straighten and weaken its flow.

The P5-million measure, to be sourced from the Priority Development Assistance Fund of Representative Valencia, will be implemented with the provincial government.

A 200-meter gabion dike will also be constructed at Mt. Muyod to redistribute the flow of water from the Aglubang and Ibolo Rivers to the other channels.

The P33 million cost of this dike will be funded by NIA.

"While we construct at the source of water above, we also need the protection dike below as a last line of defense," said Panaligan.

Meanwhile, residents were concerned over several logs found trapped in Alpis Bridge, the boundary of Barangays Sta. Rosa 1 and Mamangan 2 in Baco, Oriental Mindoro.

If not removed, the fresh cut, newly uprooted and old logs measuring 50 cm in diameter, may cause bigger floods, said Jon Sarmiento of the Diocesan Social Services.

In San Teodoro, flash floods on Dec. 27 affected almost a thousand families. The river along San Rafael Bridge also overflowed and logs were also trapped, said Manuelito Atienza, municipal administrator.

Social welfare officials reported Wednesday that floods submerged several villages in the towns of Naujan, San Teodoro, Baco and Victoria in Mindoro. *Marciano T. Virola with reports from Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

P50-M bangus, tilapia gone in Taal, Batangas fishkill

TANAUAN CITY—FISHERFOLK IN TALISAY, Batangas are facing a bleak New Year after a fishkill in Taal Lake on Thursday destroyed 720 metric tons of *bangus* and *tilapia* worth over P50 million, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said yesterday.

Lea Villanueva, chief of the Inland Fisheries Resources Station of BFAR in this city, said the actual damage to the local fishing communities in Talisay could still go up as they had yet to survey other affected areas within the lake.

As of 1 p.m. yesterday, more than 500 fish cages, or around 80 percent of the fish cages in the northern part of the Taal Lake, were affected by the fishkill.

The fish pens are located some 20 meters from the lake shore.

Villanueva said the fishkill wrought havoc on more than five hectares of fish pens in Quiling, Aya and Tumaway.

She said the dead fish were all in their mature and marketable sizes.

Fishermen in the area told them that they first noticed several dead fish floating inside their fish cages at around 1 a.m., she said.

Based on BFAR investigation, the fish died of suffocation brought about by "sulphur upwelling," a sudden discharge of sulphuric acid from the bottom of the lake.

She said fishkill in Taal Lake is actually common during the cold months and the onset of the rainy season in June.

"The increase of sulphur content in the open water decreased the dissolved oxygen [which the fish needs to breathe]," Villanueva explained.

She said the unexpected sulphur discharge within the lake is a natural phenomenon in the area since the area is situated within the active Taal Volcano.

The sulphur discharge also produced bluish green coloration in some parts of the lake and vinegar-like smell in other parts.

She said the *salatan*, or the southeast monsoon wind, worsened the situation as the wind caused mineral deposited on the bottom of the lake to surface, thus blocking the air supply for the fish.

The erratic weather conditions in the lake also contributed to the fishkill, she added.

There have been at least three reported incidences of fishkills in Taal Lake this year alone, Villanueva disclosed.

The last one happened in June and affected the fish population in Laurel town.

"But the three other fishkills were not really destructive," she said.

Villanueva said the last destructive fishkill in Taal Lake occurred five years ago wherein P68.5-M worth of fish was affected.

Villanueva clarified that despite the sulphur contamination, the dead fish were still safe for human consumption.

"*Kahit nga kami tilapia at bangus ang kinakain namin* (We ourselves eat tilapia and bangus)," to show the public that the fish are still fit for humans," she said. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Health personnel in Visayas on alert for New Year revelry

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—DESPITE AN EXPECTED drop in the number of victims of firecracker blasts, health personnel in Western Visayas are on alert for the treatment of victims during New Year revelries.

The Department of Health and government hospitals have been placed on "Code White," according to Dr. May Ann Sta. Lucia, coordinator of the DOH's Health Emergency Management Staff.

This means that there should be enough number of persons ready to respond to emergency cases as well as available medical supplies and equipment.

Sta. Lucia said they would focus their monitoring at the Western Visayas Medical Center in Iloilo City and the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Hospital in Bacolod City where most of the cases in the region were brought.

Monitoring and daily reports on blast injuries are also submitted by more than 80 DOH representatives in the region's seven provinces.

The DOH has issued four basic reminders to revelers:

- Do not use hazardous firecrackers and instead blow horns or make noise with other paraphernalia to celebrate the New Year;
- Do not pick up firecrackers that failed to explode;
- In case of injuries, immediately wash the wound with clean water and bring the victim to the nearest hospital;
- Do not fire guns.

INQUIRER Visayas

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
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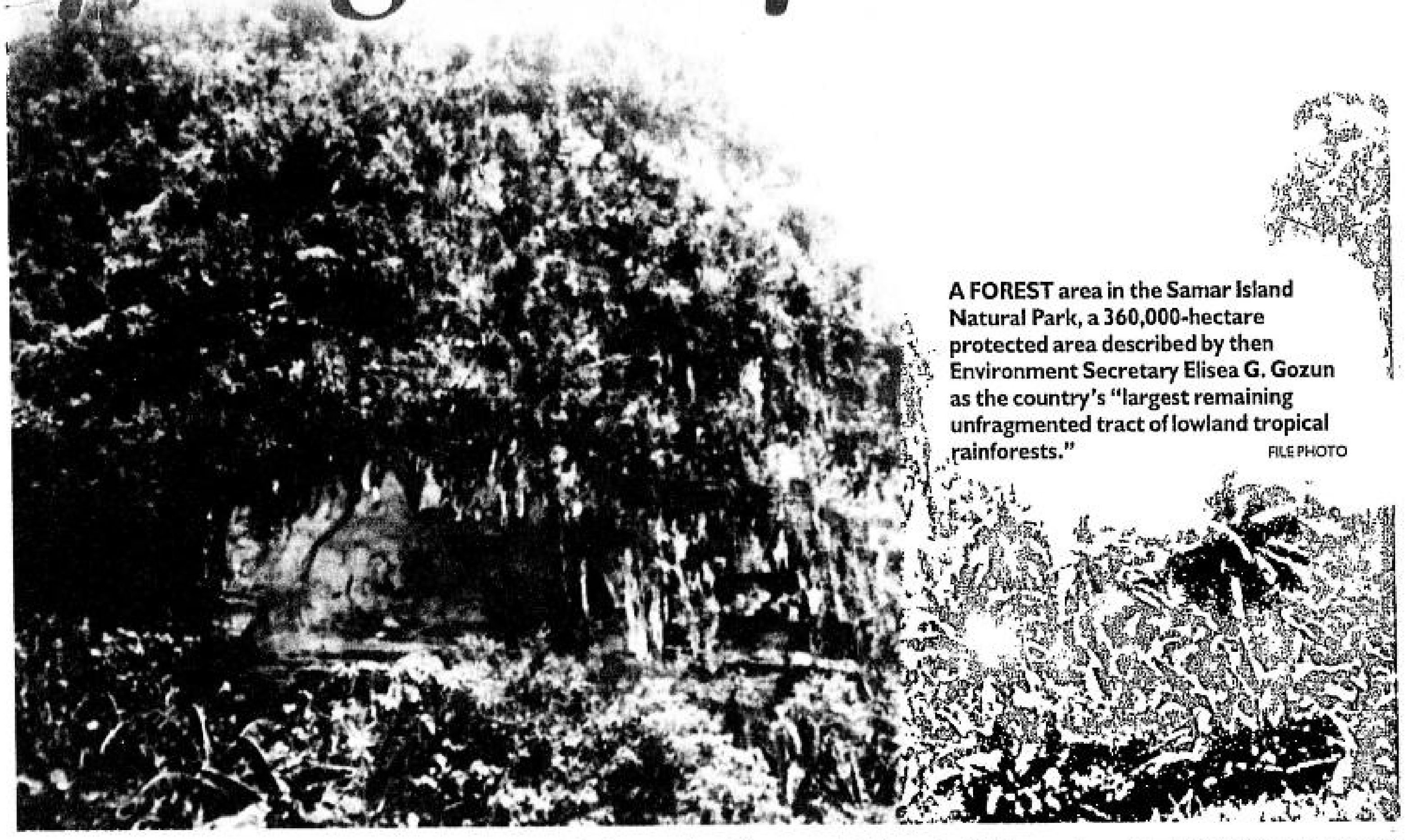
Human folly, ingenuity in 2005

THE YEAR 2005 WAS MARKED WITH TALES OF human tragedy and triumphs. While none of the devastating natural disasters that used to visit the Visayas year after year came, the region did have its unusual share of tragic and horrific deaths caused by human follies and rage. Yet, it is also a year when ingenuity and astonishing community spirit stood out.



A FOREST area in the Samar Island Natural Park, a 360,000-hectare protected area described by then Environment Secretary Elisea G. Gozun as the country's "largest remaining unfragmented tract of lowland tropical rainforests." FILE PHOTO

YEARENDER

As in the previous year, just as we thought we were left with nothing but the most absurd, debased and dishonorable of tales, we came upon people who showed us that theirs were stories that astound. Through their stories, we have basked on the goodness of others.

Ati-atihan massacre

It was Jan. 16 and the Ati-atihan merrymaking held in honor of the feast of Sto. Niño turned tragic after a policeman, PO2 Jonathan Moreño, shot dead his companions, about 20 meters from the Kalibo police station.

After the gunfire stopped, seven persons, including the province's two top police officials and a girl, were killed. A few days later, Moreño claimed his eighth victim, a physician who was among the injured in the rampage.

Wounded were five policemen, two media persons and 15 bystanders and merrymakers.

All that remained of the street earlier filled with revelers was a trail of blood that extended up to about 200 meters to where Moreño was also gunned down by his fellow policeman.

The fatalities included acting Aklan police director Supt. Oderlardo Magayanes and Kalibo police chief Chief Insp. Manuel Ilejay Jr.

No one knew what drove Moreño, 31, a native of Toboso, Negros Occidental, into the killing rampage. Some said he was angered by his superior's failure to respond to his request for a transfer.

Food poisoning

It was midday and recess time. Children aged 7 to 13 piled out of their classrooms at the tiny public elementary school in the village of San Jose, 95 km from the town proper of Mabini in Bohol.

Many ate cassava fritters, which at P1 apiece, was cheap and filling. The snack left 26 children dead and over 100 others hospitalized.

The fritters were sold by longtime school vendor, Anna Tinaan Luyong, 67, who was herself poisoned and was one of those treated at the provincial hospital in Tagbilaran City.

Investigators later charged Luyong of 26 counts of homicide. She was held liable after investigators found traces of a rat killer chemical in the frying pan where she cooked the cassava fritters.

Unsolved killings

Reminiscent of the Martial Law regime, being a human rights leader in Leyte and Samar had become extremely dangerous. The killings began in March. Before the year ended, at least six leaders of militant groups have been killed while three others survived slay attempts. All the assailants have remained unidentified; their cases unsolved.

Militant leaders did not believe it was just a coincidence because it was also about that time when controversial Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan began his command of the 8th Infantry Division, the backbone of the government's anti-insurgency operations in Eastern Visayas.

Palparan's assumption as 8th ID chief was followed by a string of unresolved killings of leaders of militant groups in the region. Human rights and militant groups have asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to remove Palparan in the area due to the alleged "massive" human rights violations committed against the civilians.

Different rights groups have recorded 513 cases of torture, harassment, abductions, disappearances and killings of civilians since Palparan was assigned there last February.

Palparan had repeatedly denied the allegations.

By August, President Arroyo caved in to pressures exerted by congressmen and human rights groups and ordered the transfer of Palparan out of the region.

Town builds road

Tired of the unfulfilled promises of top government leaders, residents of the impoverished town of Villareal, Samar (pop: 68,000) initiated early this year what could be a first in the country—the construction of an eight-kilometer cemented road through "bayanihan" (volunteerism).

This collective act made its town mayor, neophyte politician Renato La Torre, 40, proud of the people of his town. They took it upon themselves to cement the stretch of dirt road, which never changed since it was opened in 1937 or 67 years ago.

The project, dubbed the "Villareal Bayanihan Road Project," is a two-lane road covering seven villages. The road links the town to the rest of Samar province.

The Department of Public Works and Highways had estimated that the project would cost about P80 million, an amount four times the annual income of Villareal. But with the *bayanihan*, road construction could cost less than P10 million, La Torre said.

Villarealnons, working in shifts six days a week, had so far finished cementing two kilometers of the road, using materials bought with money raised from town mates who have made it good elsewhere in the country and abroad.

Putting fish to sleep

Bonifacio Comandante, a native of Siquijor, is an extraordinary Filipino for doing no one had ever done before: putting fish on hibernation without water for 24 hours.

For his feat, he won the Best International Business Award in the University of San Francisco Business Plan Competition held last March. He was the first Filipino to receive the award competed by 150 entries from over 100 universities in 18 countries.

Comandante stumbled on an "anti-stress salt solution" to enable fish to hibernate as he was experimenting on the sex reversal of groupers in Palawan in 1987.

But he did not launch the product until he had successfully defended it as his thesis for his master's degree in Coastal Resource Management at Silliman University in 2003. Comandante now heads his thriving Buhi Marine Worldwide Supply International.

His technology enables Philippine fish producers to export live fish to Japan, Taiwan, China and other fish-eating countries, for a more competitive price because they could not ship fish without water, which accounts for 75 percent of the shipment's cost.

Journalist killer's conviction

After more than three years, justice has finally been served to the family of slain journalist Edgar Damalerio.

On Nov. 29, the Cebu Regional Trial Court convicted former policeman Guillermo Wapille for the murder of Damalerio, managing editor of the Mindanao Scribe and radio commentator of dxKP, in Pagadian City on May 13, 2002.

Judge Ramon Codilla of the RTC Branch 19 sentenced Wapille to life in prison and ordered him to pay P125,000 in moral, civil and exemplary damages.

The crowd inside the jam-packed courtroom cheered after Codilla's verdict was read. One person was particularly happy—Damalerio's widow, Gemma, who called the decision a "victory for all of us."

Triumph of the bishops

Church-backed efforts to keep loggers off Samar finally came to a head during the last quarter of the year when Environment Secretary Michael Defensor lifted the ban and allowed a logging firm owned by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile to resume its operation on Samar Island.

On Dec. 2, however, faced with the seven Catholic bishops of Eastern Visayas, Defensor blinked first.

Sitting face to face for about two hours in a tension-filled dialogue with seven Catholic bishops of Samar, Leyte and Biliran, who were determined to protect the rich biodiversity of Samar Island, Defensor eventually heeded to their demand and vowed that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources would not allow logging to take place on Samar.

For their part, the bishops called off the big anti-logging and anti-mining caravan rally slated in Samar on Dec. 5 and their plan to gather 200,000 signatures to support a petition to President Arroyo seeking for the cancellation of the logging permit of San Jose Timber Corp. owned by Enrile.

Finding the daughter

Former bantamweight boxer Willie Cordova had searched for a daughter he had not seen for 32 years. When he finally saw Josie on Feb. 22, he fell on his knees and cried, begging the daughter he last saw as a 2-year-old to give him a chance to make things right.

When Josie said yes, Willie, 62, felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off his chest. "I will make it up to Josie and give her a better life," said the former boxer who now lived in Victoria, Australia.

Josie, abandoned by her mother at age 5, was a street child until she was 15 and became a housemaid. Now 34, she did not want to go with a father she did not know. But after seeing him on bended knees, crying as he sought forgiveness, Josie's heart softened. Josie finally accepted that she still has a family.

Willie later brought Josie to Manila where she was reunited with her mother, Mercedes, whom she has not seen for 29 years.

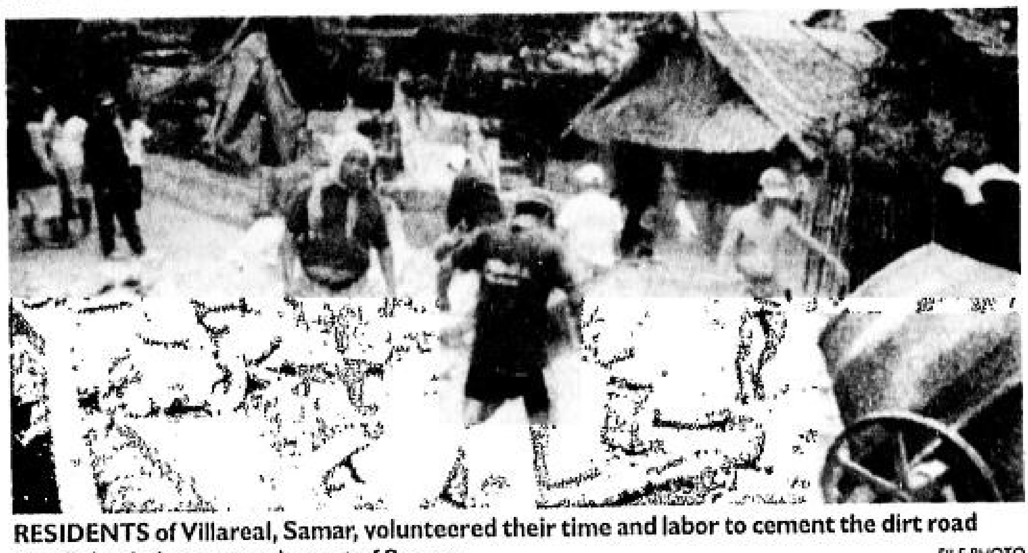
It was in the early 1970s when Willie left his family—wife, daughter and two sons—in Sagay City, Negros Occidental, for a boxing career in Australia, where he later married Yolanda Castillo, a Filipina teacher, with whom he had two sons, Wilfred and Reynard. Willie, now retired, had also worked as a machine operator at a factory in Victoria, Australia.

A near-death experience in 1992 prompted Willie to find his family in the Philippines. He first found Mercedes and the boys in Manila. He bought her a house and gave the boys a jeepney, which they would use for their business.

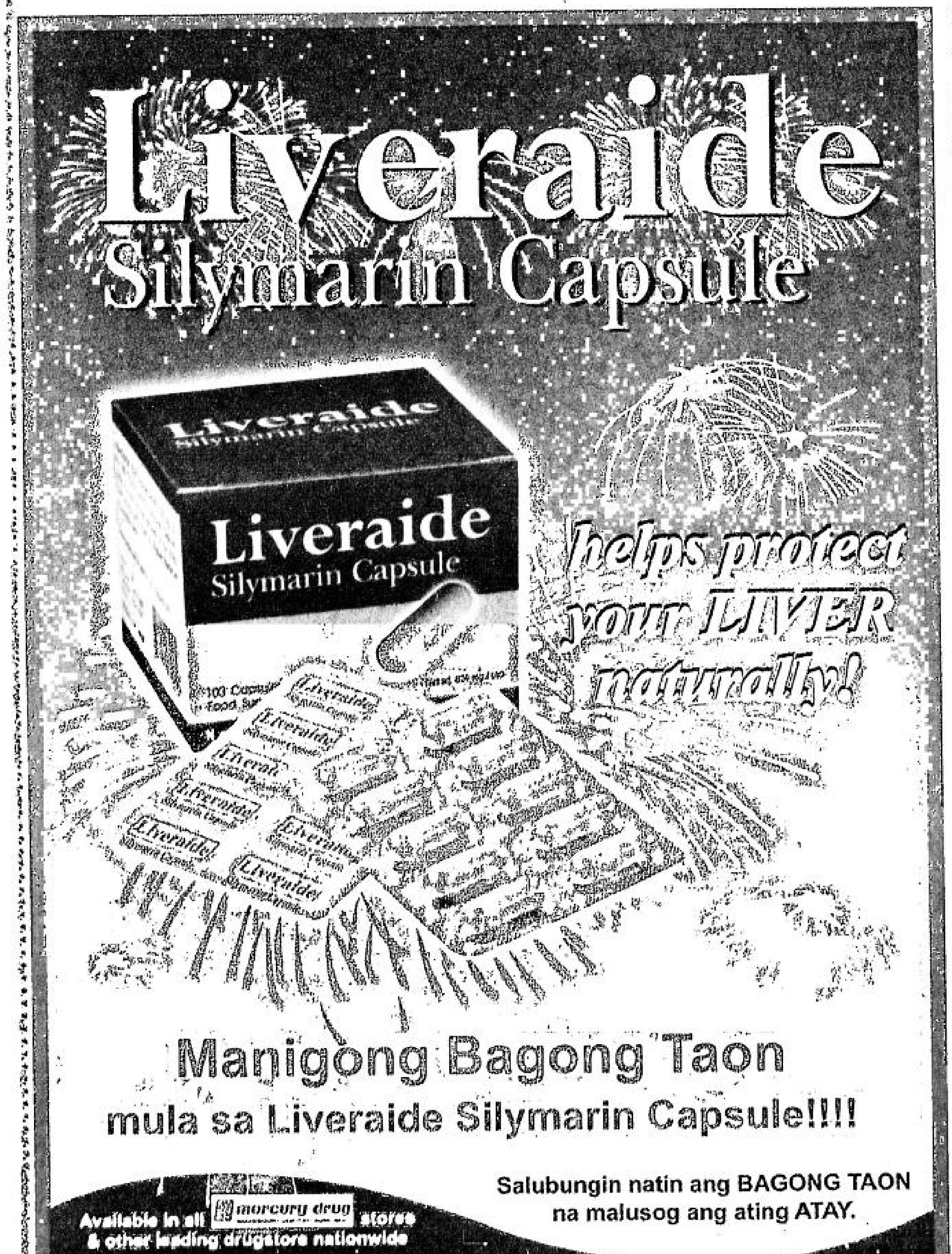
But they did not know what happened to Josie. Willie came to the Philippines several times in search for Josie until last January when he went to Negros Occidental after he heard of reports that Josie was there.

He asked Gov. Joseph Marañon for help. "I need to seek her forgiveness," he said. "I will not have peace of mind until I find her."

His appeal was picked up by a local media. Friends of Fely Cariedo, Josie's employer, heard about Willie's search and called up radio station dyRL, which in turn informed Willie where Josie could be found.



RESIDENTS of Villareal, Samar, volunteered their time and labor to cement the dirt road that links their town to the rest of Samar. FILE PHOTO



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GRANTED executive clemency, these women are happy to be home and look forward to new beginnings.

REM ZAMORA

Tondo fire leaves thousands homeless

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THREE THOUSAND FAMILIES LOST their homes and about P2.7 million worth of property was damaged in a five-hour fire that broke out in a densely populated area of Tondo, Manila, Thursday night.

No death was reported although one man sustained first degree burns on his left arm.

Arson investigators said the fire in Barangay 105, Zone 8, Happy Land, began at 9:22 p.m.

It spread quickly before it was put out at 2:52 a.m., according to SFO1 Gaudencio Magallanes.

Rolando Santos, 27, sustained first degree burns on his left arm, Magallanes said.

An arson investigator said the fire could have been caused by candles and gas lamps as the area had no electricity.

Another possible cause was firecrackers bought earlier by new year revelers.

Magallanes said, "Firecrackers like the Judas Belt and Super Lolo exploded during the fire. The residents must have carelessly stored them in their houses."

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza said emergency feeding centers and temporary relocation areas had been set up for victims.

He promised to help victims rebuild their homes.

The fire left mostly only the galvanized iron roofs and charred posts of shanties built on stilts close to Manila Bay. Residents said they failed to save their belongings.

In Sta. Ana, Manila, another fire destroyed the second floor of a garage yesterday afternoon.

No one was injured in the 12-minute fire, investigators said.

Freedom at last for 11 old women inmates

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TEARS OF JOY TRICKLING DOWN their weathered faces, 11 old and sickly women walked away from the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City and prepared to welcome a new year .

President Macapagal-Arroyo granted pardon to the inmates last week.

"I am very happy to be free at last," Dionesiana Alianza, 55, said in Filipino, her voice cracking. "But I will miss my friends. They treated me very well at the Institute." Alianza, whose legs were amputated last month because of diabetes, said she would miss most fellow inmate Merlinda Velasco who took care of her "like she would her own mother." Jailed for estafa, she looked forward to being with her husband, five children and 13 grandchildren.

A thanksgiving Mass was celebrated for the pardoned inmates. After the Mass, other inmates embraced their departing friends.

Prison Director Rachel Ruelo said at least 34 inmates were freed through executive clemency in the last two months.

"But there are still other old and sickly inmates inside. We hope they can also have a chance to spend the remaining days of their lives with their families," Ruelo said.

Ms Arroyo's grant of conditional pardon to old and sickly inmates, however, was criticized by the anti-crime group Volunteers against Crime and Corruption which said the policy "not only brings anguish to victims but exposes us to retaliation."

Also granted pardon were Bonna Custodio, wheelchair-bound because of bone cancer; Christina Aguilar, Christina Lozano, Eden Ocampo, Regina Singco, Zenaida Alvarez, Francisca Cagsawa, Melba Espiritu, Carmen Lacson and Pangandongan Mama.

Police expect arrest of suspect in Malabon trader's slay soon

By Nancy C. Carvajal

POLICE EXPECT TO ARREST BEfore the new year a suspect in the ambush of a fish trader in Malabon City that left five persons dead and two seriously wounded.

Senior Supt. Moises Guevarra, the city's chief of police, said they had the identification card and photograph of one of the suspects and he had been positively identified by several witnesses. Eight armed men ambushed Alicia Ordinario, one of the biggest fish dealers in the Malabon City Fish Port, and killed three of her bodyguards and her driver.

Police identified the fatalities as Michael Gabat, Wilfredo Minlay, Benjamin Plopino and a certain alias Jon-jon Notorious. Rosenda Orantino, who was reported as one of the casualties, is now on her way to recovery.

A fifth fatality remained unidentified.

Words of advice for the New Year

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

ALL OF US WANT TO HAVE A prosperous New Year. Who doesn't?

But do all of us follow the "law of giving" as Deepak Chopra, a spiritual guru advises in his book, "Seven Spiritual Laws of Success?"

Chopra says that if you want joy, make others happy; if you want love and appreciation, learn to love and appreciate others; if you want wealth, make others wealthy.

In other words, whatever joy, love and money you give another comes back to you tenfold, even a hundredfold.

I'm told that the average monthly earnings of a Catholic parish in the country is reportedly P4,000. This is very small compared to the number of Catholics in the Philippines.

Filipino Catholics are stingy with their church and in charity work. They drop 25 centavos into the money basket during Mass when they can afford to give P1,000. The result, following the logic of New Age thinkers that if you give P1, the universe gives you back P10, is that you get what you give. *Barya ang binigay mo, barya ang babalik sa iyo.*

If Filipinos develop prosperity consciousness, we will become a rich country. If we keep thinking that we're a rich nation even if we're still a developing one, there's no way the Philippines will not become wealthy.

What's the thinking of the average Filipino?

"We are poor. We're becoming poorer every year."

"Life is miserable. We won't get out of this mess."

"God loves the poor and hates the rich."

"Bahala na ang Diyos sa atin."

Such negative thinking makes the country stay poor.

US Andersen, in his best-selling book, "Three Magic Words," says: "It is never money that makes success; it is the thinking of the man. A conditioned habit of prosperity thinking is usually ingrained in the mind of a person who is born to wealth and plenty. This habit of positive thinking in regard to money is much a part of him as is the negation of money a part of the thinking of one who is born to poverty. As a consequence, those who are born to wealth seem to attract further wealth to themselves effortlessly. But it is not the money that accomplishes this; it is the pattern of thinking. Similarly, those born to poverty must exercise the greatest industry and perseverance before wealth smiles on them, for they must gradually condition their minds to think positively of money before money will be manifested."

In short, positive mental attitude makes for success and wealth.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Trade and Industry
GARMENTS AND TEXTILE EXPORT BOARD
New Solid Building, 357 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue,
Makati City, Philippines

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY PHILIPPINES

28 December 2005

ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL GARMENTS AND TEXTILE EXPORTERS

Starting January 1, 2006, the Garments and Textile Export Board is completely deactivated following the provisions of Executive Order 285.

1. Import-related documentation such as import licensing, Bonded-Manufacturing-Warehousing licensing/renewal, and subcontractor accreditation and registration **will continue to be processed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the 4th floor of the New Solid Building, 357 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue Extension, Makati City.**

   This licensing function will continue to be done by DTI until further notice.

2. The DTI will launch **ACT GARMENTS**, Action Center for Textiles and Garments, before the end of January 2006.

   ACT GARMENTS is a one-stop-shop for garments and textiles operated by an inter-agency machinery of DTI's trade promotion organizations.

   Details will be announced at the appropriate time.

3. Meanwhile, the Export Services and Knowledge Management Group of the Bureau of Export Trade Promotion, Department of Trade and Industry (BETP-DTI) will provide frontline services to all inquiries and assistance on garments and textiles. Contact details are:

Mr. Michael Dodjie R. Fabian
Assistant Director, Export Services and Management Group, BETP
Email Address: betpdrf@dti.gov.ph
Ms. Sonia L. Rodriguez
Chief, Export Trade Facilitation Division, BETP
Email Address: betpetfd@dti.gov.ph
Office Address: 5th Flr. New Solid Bldg.,
Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City
Telephone Nos.: 890-4640; 899-0111;
897-7605; 890-4723 Fax No.: 895-3198

Congratulations to the garments and textiles export sector for growing exports by +27% in October and +5% year-to date for the same period by continuing to respond positively to the changes in the global market place!

We wish you all a prosperous New Year!

(Sgd.) **SERAFIN N. JULIANO**
Executive Director

(PDI – December 31, 2005)

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

METRO

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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil**

ALL SET
Children light firecrackers at Quiapo's Plaza Miranda one day early to welcome the new year.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Law is clear about traffic issue – MMDA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

TO AVOID CONFUSION CAUSED BY the recent announcement of a Supreme Court ruling setting limits on its powers, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday appealed for public confidence as it asserted what it called its "mandated duties" to the riding public.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando made the appeal in the wake of reports that the agency, by continuing to apprehend erring drivers, was defying the High Court's ruling barring its enforcers from confiscating driver's licenses.

"What is there to defy? The MMDA no longer confiscates licenses, and the Supreme Court even said its decision was already moot and academic," Fernando told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

In a ruling dated Dec. 5, the Supreme Court affirmed with finality its earlier decision preventing the agency from confiscating the licenses of traffic violators. Fernando said the decision did not change the agency's traffic apprehension system already in place, as it was no longer confiscating licenses.

"For instance, if you are caught violating a traffic rule, an enforcer would ask for your driver's license only for identification purposes. The license is then returned to you," Fernando said.

The MMDA chair also advised the public to be wary about some of the information they get. "You may never see the source of the information tomorrow, but we are here. The enforcers are easily identifiable, and I'm here. If you have any complaints, all you have to do is see me."

MMDA General Manager Robert Nacianceno, for his part, said enforcers would remain true to its mandated duty.

"We told them to continue apprehending violators. The Supreme Court did not make a decision that stripped us of our police powers. It doesn't say that we can't apprehend a violator anymore," he explained.

MMDA's traffic enforcers continue to issue Traffic Violation Receipts (TVRs) to errant drivers under a scheme that was modified when TVRs were again used last October.

Updated

Under the updated system, enforcers no longer asked for drivers' licenses. Fines could also be settled through paying in any Metrobank branch.

The innovation came after a Makati court issued an injunction five months earlier barring the MMDA from further implementing its Metropolitan Traffic Ticket scheme, a ticketing system that did away with the confiscation of licenses. The two schemes, however, were essentially the same.

"What the SC decision said was that if there is any legislation serving as a basis for the apprehension, then we are duty bound to implement the law. In fact, it recognizes that we should implement a single ticketing scheme," said the official, adding that such duties were stated in Republic Act 7924, the law that created the MMDA.

"We might be cited for dereliction of duty if we do not implement the law," he added.

Nacianceno also assured the MMDA's more than 2,000 traffic enforcers that the agency would provide them with legal assistance in the event they are brought to court "for doing their job."

NBI catches up with US fugitive

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AN AMERICAN FUGITIVE LONG WANTED for attacking his wife in the United States was arrested by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Butuan City last Tuesday.

The US Embassy had requested the agency's assistance for the arrest of Andrew David Kent, 44, of Los Angeles, California, according to NBI Interpol Division executive officer Claro de Castro III.

Kent was convicted for assaulting his Filipino-American wife Miriam Campano.

The suspect then fled to the Philippines four years ago and settled in Butuan City as a farmer.

The United States District Court, Central District of California, had issued a warrant for Kent's arrest last Nov. 29 for violating Title 18, United States Code 1073 or Unlawful Flight To Avoid Prosecution.

While admitting that he was a fugitive, Kent said that he violated conditions for parole to fulfill a promise to his dying father.

"I brought my father to the Philippines because health care is cheaper here than in the United States," Kent told reporters.

He added that he only had to spend P20,000 a month for personal nurses here compared to the P20,000 he had to spend daily in the US for the care of his father.

LOTTO RESULTS

EZ2
15 26

SUERTRES
0 0 7

FOUR DIGIT
8 0 9 7
(In exact order)

MEGALOTTO 6/45
4 19 21 32 37 42
₱16,180,419.60
(In exact order)

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HO HO HO
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Happy Holidays
merry xmas!
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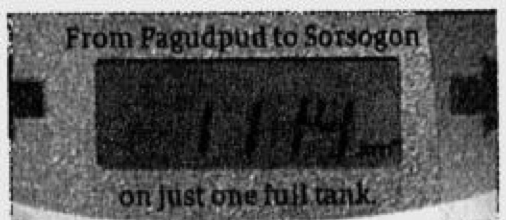

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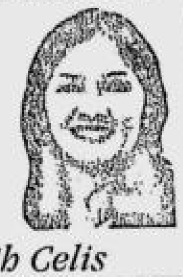
on just one full tank.
XTRA
*Actual test result on a 1300 cc vehicle, as certified true by Automobile Association of the Philippines and Car Awards Group, Inc.
PETRON

Can this guy save RP chess?

WHEN I FIRST MET HIM OVER EIGHT years ago, Prospero "Butch" Pichay—not yet a congressman then—was a hands-on businessman who owned Capitol Broadcasting Corporation and a string of high-circulating tabloids, among them Remate and Remate Tonight.

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

That time, Butch had just acquired AM radio station DZME and was looking for a host for a sports program. He next sought me out, going to the extent of dropping by my house (coincidentally on my birthday).

Although microphone shy, Butch was such a good talker he was able to convince me to accept his offer to host the one-hour show aired on Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 12 noon. Butch had wanted a daily program but being new in the radio broadcast media, I told him I could only cope with a weekend schedule.

***

Today, the radio program titled "Usapang Sports" still exists with a host no longer mike-shy, but just the opposite—whatever you take that to mean. The show has attracted a huge following. It is headed by the indefatigable Sports Vigilantes who research and keep themselves updated on the major disciplines.

However, I had completely lost track of Butch Pichay since I sat on board and practically had forgotten all about him. I was most surprised when he ran and won as congressman of Surigao. I would see him on television, read about him in the papers, but we never even touched base.

Until yesterday morning, when I finally tracked him down for an interview.

***

Butch said he did not intend to get so deeply involved in chess.

As president of the Philippine Surfing Federation, his attention, effort and resources were focused on the sport, with the primary objective of promoting tourism in the country.

There are 15 million surfers all over the world, he said, and the Philippines has many ideal places that could be developed to attract this market. "Surfing is not a popular sport in this country, but through it, I believe we can showcase the Philippines to attract foreign tourists. We have magnificent waters that can compare with some of the best places in the world. Siargao in Surigao has the longest roll in the world," said Butch who has raised P5 million for the funding of surfing projects.

***

Butch said he got connected with chess when a group of wooodpushers from Surigao sought his assistance after the Southeast Asian Games.

"The Philippines has four grandmasters and chess was given a total budget of P7 million (P4 million from the First Gentleman and P3 million from the PSC) for SEAG training and preparation, but not a single gold medal was won. It was a debacle! Can you imagine Eugene Torre being beaten by a 12-year-old? We won five gold medals in Vietnam, I thought we would at least approximate that in Manila. But we didn't even win a single gold. This is a big cause for concern," Butch said.

Whether the P7 million was used to prepare the athletes, Butch couldn't tell.

He said the players were complaining of lack of competition.

"That's the reason I thought of staging the Pichay Chess Challenge, which they said was the biggest tourney in the last 10 years. In fact, they said they have not participated in a tourney with big prizes for a long, long time. *Parang naging* Christmas gift *ko na sa kanila itong* tournament," Butch said. He raised half a million pesos in prizes, tapping private and local government sectors.

***

While he didn't have the slightest intention of running for any position in the NCFP, both his townmates and the new friends he has gained in the Federation are now strongly urging him to take over the helm left by Go Teng Kok over a month earlier.

"If they encourage me, I will not lift a finger to go against them," said Butch who played chess competitively during his four years in the seminary.

"I think the Philippines has a good chance of being one of the world powers in chess. My vision is to bring back the golden age in chess which was during the time of Eugene Torre who battled the world's greatest. That was the era of Bobby Fischer, Gary Kasparov, Boris Spassky, to mention a few."

If he becomes president of the NCFP, Butch plans to equip the association with the latest in computers and software. He also intends to set up an office and an up-to-date library.

"I believe I can really do something for chess," he said.

SINGAPORE CHESS

Paragua rips Israeli GM

SINGAPORE—FILIPINO Grandmaster Mark Paragua made short work of Israeli GM Victor Mikhalevski in just 28 moves of a Queen's Gambit Declined Friday to finish fourth in the 2005 Singapore Masters and Challengers International Open chess championships at the Hotel Royal in Newton Road here.

The 21-year-old Paragua, the country's top player and last year's co-champion here, finished with 6.5 points, the same output of former world junior women champion GM Koneru Humpy of India and IM Salor Sitanggang of Indonesia.

But the most bemedalled Filipino in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games was ranked fourth due to a superior quotient in the tie-break.

Meanwhile, 2004 National Open champion Darwin Laylo become the newest RP international master after drawing with compatriot and GM Nelson Mariano II in just 15 moves of an English Opening.

The native of San Roque, Marikina City scored 5.0 points in nailing his third and last IM norm.

Laylo's big wins include a victory against 2005 Penang Open champion IM Stefan Loeffler of Germany in the second round, and another over GM Humpy, the top girl under-20 player in the third round. He also drew with GM Wu Shaobin of Singapore in the fifth round.

The team's chief benefactors were Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay, sports patron Aristeo Puyat and Filway-Time Life CEO/ president Hector Tagaysay. ***Marlon Bernardino, contributor***

FINAL STANDINGS:

(Open section)

7.5-GM Ni Hua (China); 7.0-GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili (Georgia), GM Zhang Zhong (China); 6.5-GM Mark Paragua (RP), GM Koneru Humpy (India), IM Salor Sitanggang (Indonesia); 6.0-FM Julio Catalino Sadorra (RP), GM Susanto Megaranto (Indonesia), 6.0-GM Victor Mikhalevski (Israel), 6.0-WGM Zhao Xue (China)

(Challengers)

7.5-Boy T (Indonesia) 7.5-Rustum Tolentino (RP), Wilman Endey (Indonesia); 7.0-Rodolfo Panopio Jr. (RP); 6.5-Dr. Alfredo Paez (RP), Yi-Sen Lee (Singapore), Ramon Manon-og (RP), Rohit Ashok Kadam (Singapore), Dr. Jenny Mayor (RP), Victor Hong We Liam (Singapore), Zeng Weng Wong (Malaysia), Matthew Chin (Singapore), Jan Vincent Paragua (RP), Leo Daylo Jr. (RP), Weng Kim Chan (Singapore), Kia Hua Tan (Singapore)

Category winners:

Best women player: WGM Zhao Xue (China); Best girl under-20: GM Humpy Koneru (India); Best junior under-20: GM Susanto Megaranto (Indonesia); Best junior under-16: IM Jason Goh (Singapore); Best junior under-12: FM Wesley So (RP)

Abapo defends crown today

PHILIPPINE SUPER LIGHTWEIGHT champion and ALA boy Bart Abapo will defend his title tonight in a grudge rematch with Cagayan de Oro's Rex Marzan at the CPG Multi-Purpose Center in Talibon, Bohol.

Both Abapo and Marzan came in at 140 lbs during the official weigh-in yesterday supervised by GAB's Vic Cabalog.

Abapo and Marzan fought for the same title last March in Tagbilaran, Bohol with Abapo flooring the Cagayan native in the eighth round after suffering a knockdown earlier in the fight.

After taking the crown, Abapo made a successful stint in Korea where he scored a bloody technical decision against Korea's Dong Geun Jang last July.

He also fought in Bangkok where he suffered a heartbreaking loss to former world contender Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai.

Dubbed as 'Rambolan sa Talibon,' the card is presented by SGG Sports Promotion under international promoter Sammy Gello-ani in cooperation with the town of Talibon headed by Mayor Juanario Item.

The main card will be supported by a stellar cast of protagonists headed by RP No. 2 light flyweight Donnie Nietes who will fight Roldan Malinao of Butuan City. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

LIGHT MOMENT

President Arroyo jokes around with national athletes who participated in the recent Southeast Asian Games shortly after commemorating the 109th martyrdom celebration of Dr. Jose Rizal held at the Rizal monument in Burnham Park, Baguio City. Beside her is national team benefactor First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. PATRICK CASTILLO

RP riders finish 4th, bag top team rookie trophy

BANGKOK, THAILAND—LED BY MAICO Buncio and John Lery Enriquez, Team Yamaha-Philippines made the country proud when it earned the coveted Rookie Team of the Year award and placed fourth in the overall country category in the 2005 Yamaha ASEAN Cup held at the Bangkok Racing Circuit recently.

Buncio, who also represented the country in Shah Alam, Malaysia last year, emerged as the highest-placed Filipino when he finished 10th overall in the prestigious competition, which attracted the best and brightest riders from the Southeast Asian region.

"We're satisfied with Maico's 10th-place finish this year considering the presence of several outstanding riders from host Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore," said Team Yamaha-Philippines Manager Jun Alfonso of Norkis.

"Maico's finish is also two notches better than his 12th place in the inaugural Yamaha ASEAN Cup in Shah Alam, Malaysia last year," added his father, Gregorio "Yoyong" Buncio, who is best remembered for leading the four-man RP-Yamaha team which climbed the country's second highest peak, Mt. Pulag, several years ago.

Buncio noted the exceptional times posted by Filipino riders in both the free practice sessions and qualifying rounds despite seeing the racetrack for the first time last Dec. 16-18.

Three other Filipino riders—Jaime Barcial, Armando Canare and Jeffrey Chana—also finished in the Top 20.

Rotary's golfest kicks off Jan. 18

ROTARIAN GOLFERS FROM ALL over the country will converge in Baguio City for the RGFFP's 20th year golf classic on Jan. 18-21.

Tournament venues Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay Golf and Contry club have a combined 14 par 3s, which will all be covered by valuable prizes for ace-makers.

In the last tournament, Charter President Sonny Mendoza of RC Makati Southwest aced hole No. 13 at John Hay, but it was not one of four designated holes for the P1 million prize.

The usual P1 million hole-in-one prize will be upgraded to a 2006 Toyota Fortuner.

He won a wide-screen television set instead and "aced" the grand raffle to win a P100,000 Breitling watch co-sponsored by Lucerne Jewellers.

The defending overall team champion is RC Baguio 2 composed of Herr Bautista, Rocky Molintas, Mars Garcia and Federico Mandapat.

Among the early sponsors are Toyota Manila Bay, Asia Brewery, Lucerne Jewellers, General Nutrition Centers (GNC), Osim Philippines and Ortigas and Co.

For more details, contact RGFFP secretariat's Pauline Sevilla (0920-9199000) or Leah Grubat (0920-9087635) at 7218667 loc. 110, fax No. 7215940 or e-mail rgffp1997@yahoo.com

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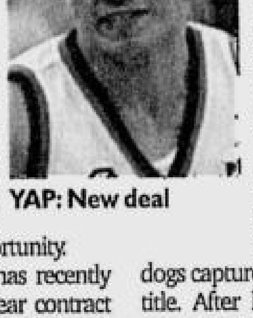
New deal keeps Yap with Giants until '07

By June Navarro



YAP: New deal

ROGER YAP KNOWS the importance of a long-term contract—or even a shorter one—in the Philippine Basketball Association.

So when the management of Purefoods Chunkee dangled a pact that would guarantee his stay with the Giants until 2007, Yap didn't think twice in grabbing the opportunity.

The Purefoods guard has recently signed a one-and-a-half-year contract with the Giants that could fatten his bank account by P3.8 million in salaries apart from other perks and bonuses.

"Long contracts are hard to come by," said Ed Ponceja, Yap's agent. "Even the superstars of the league don't get a long bargain with the teams nowadays."

League restrictions on the salary cap have forced teams to cut on spending while the high turnover rate of players gave active players no choice but to take what's on the table.

From P36 million, the team cap has been reduced to P30 million in a span of three years.

The Giants acquired the 6-foot Yap, a former Philippine Basketball League MVP, from Shell right after the Turbochargers decided to call it quits before the 2005-2006 season.

It was actually a reunion for coach Ryan Gregorio and Yap, who helped the then TJ Hotdogs capture the 2002 Governors Cup title. After leading the Shark to the crown in the PBL, Yap was drafted by Purefoods on the same year.

The Cebuano slasher was traded to Air21 in 2003 but was later shipped to Shell under coach Leo Austria, his long-time mentor in the PBL.

"I told him (Yap) to be patient," said Ponceja. "If he improves this season, his value as a player will certainly increase along with his pay check."

After 16 games in the ongoing San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference, Yap is currently ranked 11th overall for the best player of the conference award.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Saturday, December 31, 2005

Sayaw.
Drama.
Iba.
Shall We Dance?
The Celebrity Dance Challenge
Sunday 9 PM
hosted by Lucy Torres Gomez
ABC
Iba Tayo!

ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Art Is Kool	KNN	Anime Ring Kaisho		PBA					Wow Maling Mali		Blind Item		Yearender		ABCinema			
ABS-CBN 2	ETK				Nginiig		Little Big Star		My Juan And Only		Quizon Avenue	Magandang Gabi Bayan		TV Patrol World	Pinoy Big Brother	Sabado Movie Greats			
AXN		Kung Fu Hustle				Jumanji				Panic Room					Las Vegas		House		The World's Wildest Commercials
Cartoon Network		Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Xiaolin Showdown	Tom & Jerry Show		Codename Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teen Titans	Samurai Jack	The Life & Times Of Juniper Lee	Powerpuff Girls	Courage The Cowardly Dog	Dexter's Laboratory	Crush Gear Nitro	The Gransazers	Superman The Animated Series	Spatch 2021 (11:15PM)	Aqua Teen Hunger Force
Cinema One	Bahay Ni Lola 2				Dreamboy				My Movie				Pag-ibig Ko Sa Iyo'y Totoo						
Cinemax			Stranger At The Door (3:45 PM)				For Love Or Money			2 Fast 2 Furious (7:15 PM)				Father's Day			Gargoyle's Revenge		
CNN	Diplomatic License	World News	World Business This Week	World News	International Correspondents	World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		World News	Next@CNN	World News	Design 360	World News	World Sport	World News	Talk Asia	World News	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart
Discovery Channel		Human Discovery		Extreme Machines				Hour China		Wild Discovery				Crime Stories		Mummy Autopsy		Extreme Discovery	
Disney Channel	Recess	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Brandy & Mr. Whiskers	Lilo & Stitch	Totally Spies	Mr. Bean	Phil Of The Future	Suite Life Of Zack And Cody	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Mr. Bean	America's Funniest Home Video	Phil Of The Future	Even Stevens	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Rewind: Premier Snooker League 2005				International Ironman Triathlon		Rewind: China Open Final				Sportscenter Asia		Nfl's Greatest Moments	NBA Game Knicks @ Bucks				
ETC		Saturday Night Live		For Love Or Money		Joan Of Arcadia		The O.C.		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Last Comic Standing		Saturday Night Live		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Miracles Of The Child Jesus	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Image Of God	Adventures In Odyssey	Knights Of St. Michael	Rosary With Mother Angelica	The Church And The Poor-Building Bridges	Catholic Compass		The World Over Encore		Fr. John Corapi		Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Sacraments Through The Ages	Life on The Rock Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Special Report With Brit Hume		Fox & Friends Saturday						Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business
GMA 7	Startalk			Wish Ko Lang		Wag Kukurap	Pinoy Pop Superstar		Bitoy's Funniest Videos/Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho		Imbestigador		Hokus Pocus			Showbiz Stripped			
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Lives Of The Saints				Lives Of The Saints				Returning Lily				King Of Texas			Mary Bryant (10:35PM)		
HBO	Torque (2:40 PM)			Beethoven's 5th			Kart Racer			Mona Lisa Smile				13 Going On 30			Rome Ep 07: Pharsalus (10:35PM)		Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban
IBC 13		Home Shopping Network		Nations Peacekeeper	Good Take	Home Shopping Network		Pangarap Kong Jackpot		The Basketball Show		Nuts	Men of Power	Bitag		Philippine Sabong Sports			
JackTV		Worst Case Scenario		Cheat	Filter	Samurai Jack	X-Men	Justice League Unlimited	The Batman	WWE Bottomline		Wwe Raw				South Park	The Man Show	Chappelle's Show	Beat The Geeks
Lifestyle Network	Living Space	Season Of Lights		Radical Sabbatical	Road & Track	Genuine Article	Food Fight	Date Plate	Emeril Live		Iron Chef America		How Do I Look		101 Most Sensational Crimes Of Fashion				
MTV Philippines	Hanging Out	MTV Hits	Wade Robson Project	MTV Presents				Homecoming	Punk'D	Wild N' Out	MTV Cribs	MTV Livewire		Chart Attack		Brand New	Massive	Jams	Rockola
MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Bandarito	MYX News	MYX Presents		Take 5	Radio MYX	Top Of The Pops	Star MYX	MYXLOG	Pop MYX	MYX Live!		Pinoy MYX Countdown				MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Big Bite Nite				Saving The Jackass Penguin		Creature Feature		Wow!		The Astounding World		Dragons Of The Galapagos		Big Bite Nite			
NBN				Corporate Billiards League		3rd ASEAN Para Olympic Games		Tele ng Bayan (Live)		Talk To Harry		GSIS Member's Hour		Isla Hour On NBN				Auto Focus	
Nickelodeon	Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide	Unfabulous	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	Zoey 101	Avatar: The Last Airbender	Danny Phantom	Kids Choice Awards	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	Four Eyes	Zoey 101	Unfabulous	Girls In Love	Chalkzone	Four Eyes	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Kalabog En Bosyo				Sana Bumaba Ang Langit Sa Lupa				Hiram Na Mukha				Captain Barbell				Magic Kingdom
Qtv		3R		Candies		Fam Jam		Fans Kita		Ayi!! Robot		Day-Off		Sabado Showdown				MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9		Open Line	Pagcor Sports Idol	Biyaheng Langit	Kids TV	Barangay Bida		Isumbong mo kay Tulfo		Medical Investigation		CSI: Miami		Silent Hunter				Money Talk	
SBN 21				Friends Again		Sheperds Voice		Sony Bmg Video		JA1		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Tour Championships by Porsche Los Angeles						Solar Sports 2005 Year In Review				NBA Jam	GWS Ep.53-2005	NBA Game Heat @ Wizards					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus				This Is The PGA Tour		BD Palm Springs	BD Oahu	World Poker Tour ep 9 Los Angeles				Ultimate Fighting Championship				ADT Golf Skills Chal. Day1			
Star Movies			Robocop			Robocop 2 (5:15 PM)				Robocop 3 (7:15 PM)				I, Robot		I, Robot (10:55PM)			
Star World		The Collector		Miami Vice		Wild Card		John Doe/ The Man Upstairs		Chronicles, News From The Edge		TNA Xplosion		Ghosthunters/Ms World E. John At Radio City Music Hall Swarovski Fashion Rocks For The Prince		Enterprise	Michael Jackson Number Ones	Kumars At 42/ Three Tenors Live In Beijing	Miss World
Studio 23								Sports TV	Mr. Bean	Pinoy Big Brother		Gilmore Girls (7:50 PM)	Jack & Bobby (8:40 PM)		Studio 23 Present				

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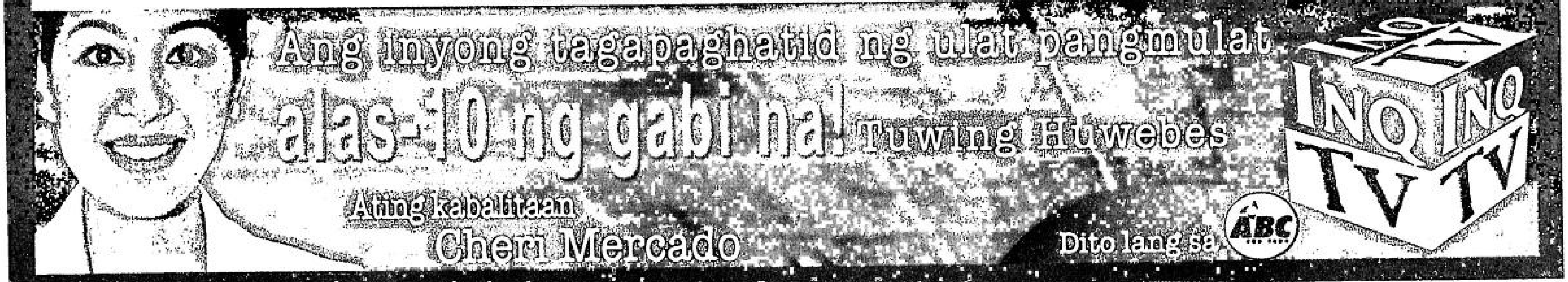
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Wild Orchid bids to cap 2005 with big triumph

Musong R. Castillo

TER SHOWING UNBEATABLE FORM JUST A ek back, super imported filly Wild Orchid tries close out her overpowering season with a win inst three other noted entries in the Santa Ana k championship today.

The New Zealand-bred three-year-old, who will partnered by Fernando Raquel again, will be oting for a 12th victory in her 19th start and l be sent off as the overwhelming first choice af- her swashbuckling victory last Saturday.

The progeny of High Yield and Irish broodmare ve Orchid blitzed the rich Philracom Classic en Championship field at the San Lazaro in mona recently, clocking a record-equaling 4.5 over 2,000 meters to beat Real Spicy by lengths under little punishment.

Though there will be two other imports and a lone local entry in Pine Needles, Wild Orchid looks to be a class above the others in the compact field which will be disputing the P.5 million top prize.

Sound Offer and Being There are the other imported entries who will be ridden by Jonathan Hernandez and JB Cordova, respectively.

Pine Needles, another three-year-old filly who will be guided by ace Patty Dilema, will carry the lightest handicap weight of 53 for the 1,800-meter journey.

Owned by lawyer Edmond Moreno and trained by Jose Fernandez, Wild Orchid has so far won five major races and already has a firm lock of this year's Champion Import title.

Another major win would line her up for the Horse of the Year title, an unprecedented achievement for an import campaigner.

Wild Orchid has won the fourth leg of the Santa Ana Park Championship and the Philracom Imported Stakes Series, the P2-M Don Juan Derby, the 2005 All-Import Championship and the 2005 Philracom Classic Open.

Set to spice up trackside action today at the Santa Ana Park are two other featured stakes races, dubbed as the 2005 Philracom "Pasasalamat sa Bayang Karerista" Races slated as races 9 and 10.

The two Philracom-sponsored events carry total prizes worth P347,000.

Likewise, the Off-Track Betting Stations Association of the Philippines (OTB-Sapi) will also participate in three other featured New Year's Cup races offering a P10,000 bonus to the winning entry.

CA derby set

N MORE AMERICANS HAVE CONned their participation in the muchaited "NCA International 8–cock rby," bringing to 25 the number of eign guests in the biggest world ckfighting event slated on Jan. 16, and 20 at the San Juan Coliseum. e visitors will be bannered by Jim- Cox, who won the World Champiship Cup 9-cock derby recently in you Club, Lousiana, New Orleans.

JC cockfest slated

E FIRST DERBY FOR 2006 IS t at the newly opened San Juan liseum, a big-time 5-cocker on n. 4 that will feature more than fights and will be sponsored by gupaan Complexor 3000. Seeaction are members of the ntlemen Cockers Association of Philippines (GCAP) as well as est participants from Davao, bu, Negros Occidental, Iloilo, bela, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zamles and Nueva Ecija. SJC reened on Sept. 13 via the highly ccessful GCAP Big Event 8-stag rby won by Bebot Roxas of Tar. For details, call 7227366 and 55369.

Two title fights in Sinulog card

TWO PHILIPINE NATIONAL TITLES will be at stake in what is expected to be a big Sinulog boxing spectacle on Jan. 15 at the Gaisano Countrymall in Cebu City.

Reigning Philippine welter boss Dondon "Supremo" Sultan of the SGG Stable will defend his 140-lb crown against Cezar Yarte of the Wakee Salud Stable in a grudge rematch of their 2002 fight.

In the co-feature, RP flyweight king Federico "Magnifico" Catubay will defend his title for the first time against RP No. 5 Louie Bantigue in another 12-round tiff.

Promoted by Sammy Gello-ani, the card will be held free to the public.

Sultan, from Labason, Zamboanga del Norte, will be making the fourth defense of the welterweight crown.

In their last meeting, Sultan fought back from imminent defeat to knock out Yarte in the 12th and last round.

The stocky Catubay, coming off a decision loss to Japan's Noriyuki Komatsu, won the RP title with an impressive stoppage of a jaded Jerry Pahayahay early last year in Cagayan de Oro City.

In the undercard, hot prospect Robert Allanic sees action against a yet unnamed foe while other ALA and SGG fighters are also being groomed to do battle against separate opponents. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Tagaytay City rules taekwondo tilt

THE HOST TEAM RAN AWAY WITH the overall championship of the third Tagaytay City Invitational Taekwondo Championships held recently at the Tagaytay Sports Complex.

Tagaytay Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino's jins bagged 13 gold, 12 silver and 14 bronze medals in clinching the crown. San Pablo, with an 11-2-4 gold-silver-bronze tally, was second followed by Thunder Kick with 10-6-4 and Silang (Cavite) with 7-11-2.

More than 300 jins from 14 taekwondo clubs, schools, colleges and universities in Region IV and the National Capital Region took part in the tournament.

Among the individual gold medal winners were Neil Mediran, EJ Jamon, Rolf Mediran, Angelica Espiritu, Bea Navarro, Irish Garcia, RJ Santos, Jade Zafra, Joshua Lee, Jonathan Pilada, Barbara Batomalaque, Bonel Batino and Brize Valerio.

Earning silver medals in the event organized and supervised by Tagaytay councilor Boy Castillo and the Tagaytay Taekwondo Club headed by Jayson Enriquez were Reymark Bautista, Princes dela Pena, Patricia Famorca, Samantha Peredo, Aldrin Sapida, Marra Madlansacay, Monneth Velilla, Vincent Bautista, Mathew Joe, Mark Banca, Clarence Calderon and JP Adamos.

Parting with PSA tradition

By Percy D. Della

COMMENTARY

TEXTED MY BOSOM BUDDY Ding Marcelo to fact check the other day.

Isn't it custom, almost tradition for the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) to give the President of the Republic first dibs on keynoting the annual PSA awards dinner?

"Yeah," replied the Manila Bulletin's sports editor, a former PSA president. "But she (President Arroyo) has turned down (the) PSA invite (this year)."

Precisely my point, old pal.

It seems the PSA has followed protocol with admirable seriousness. It has invited GMA without fail year in and year out, but to no avail—to hand out the association's Athlete of the Year plum.

Why, if memory serves PSA treasurer Joe Antonio right, the first and last time GMA came to a PSA awards night was three or four years ago. She arrived front and center with full presidential panoply, says the Journal's sports chief, stayed for a few minutes and left in a flash right after the photo opportunity.

Prompted by GMA's disappearing act, Malaya Sports boss Jimmy Cantor recalls writing a column with just the right degree of indignation. "She came, she saw, she left," Cantor remembers writing.

As the current PSA president, Cantor did not take a number this year. Fine if the President's schedule makers and image builders didn't think on their feet like a baseball pitcher. When you are on the mound, the action is relentless. There's hardly enough time to think between pitches.

Fine if the President's political spinners dabbling as sports advisers are reading the tea leaves and looking at political realities. Are these operatives disallowing the boss lady to bask a minute longer in a fleeting sports version of Camelot that will become irreversible by the time the Asian Games come around, or even earlier?

Beats the heck out of the PSA.

But the guild's officers are not ignoring the presidential luster altogether. They are merely going from one sports bookend to the other.

If Gloria's not inclined to dine with sportswriters at all, why not invite her roommate instead. After all, the First Gentleman, unlike the missus, is a known patron of sports, a benefactor of athletes, sometimes to a fault.

There will be no political gain, no political pain either, if Jose Miguel Arroyo comes to toast the PSA Athlete of the year—the entire Philippine team with a 113-gold medal harvest in the 29th Southeast Asian Games.

After the firestorm that raged when the FG decided to bring the SEA Games gold medalists to Hong Kong as their reward for winning the overall SEA Games crown, what ill fortune could possibly await him at the PSA gathering?

The Association will hear from the FG's office today if he indeed will be at the Manila Pavilion on Jan. 14th.

If I were a gambler, I would lay out odds for Mike Arroyo to come.

Unless daughter Luli is in a battle mode with reporters.

Sports note: Mrs. Norayda Domingo Dumandan, a surrogate mother to a teen-age maverick many moons ago, passed away on Dec. 28th. Auntie Noring was my mom's elder sister. Widowed early, she was a Rock of Gibraltar to a brood of six. She will be buried at the municipal cemetery in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija at a date still to be announced.

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It's the guys who find out that this gal's got game

WASHINGTON
13

IF FORMER Washington star Giuliana Mendiola's mom is to be believed, the best ball player in America is a woman. WWW.GOHUSKIES.OCSN.COM

LOS ANGELES—AGAINST MEN A FOOT taller and way stronger, Giuliana Mendiola shows no fear. She scrambles on defense, dives for loose balls, swats away passes.

If the guys leave her open, the 5-foot-11, 179-pound guard shoots with confidence and often makes the men sorry they underestimated her tenacity.

"It's all about respect," Mendiola said. "They're learning to respect me."

As a member of the Los Angeles Aftershock, Mendiola is the only woman playing in the American Basketball Association, a 48-team league packed with college standouts and old pros looking for court time and promotion.

In four-plus seasons, 38 ABA players have jumped to the NBA. Mendiola wants to be the first to jump back to the WNBA.

"That's my career goal," she said. "When I signed up for this, I figured if I could play against guys, I could play in the WNBA."

Beating Rodman

Last month, the former Sacramento Monarch made history as the first woman to start a game in a men's professional basketball league. She earned a mention in Sports Illustrated for her performance—12 points, six assists, four steals, three rebounds—against the Tijuana Dragons, Dennis Rodman's latest team.

"They're really in a no-win situation against her," Aftershock coach Andre Smith said of opponents. "If they don't guard her, she'll put up that three-pointer and make them pay. If they do guard her, it opens up our game inside and creates opportunities for other players.

Proving a point

Mendiola, 23, wants to prove her toughness—and a point. If she's quick enough to compete against men, why can't she find a job in the WNBA?

"This will probably cost me any chance of ever coaching in the WNBA, but I don't understand it," Smith said.

As always, her family stands behind her.

"She's the best player in America," mom Alicia Mendiola said. "I don't know why she's not in the WNBA."

Family matters most to the Mendiolas. Giuliana and brother Lucciano are the youngest of nine children. When she decided to stay stateside, Giuliana moved back home to Lake Forest in Orange County.

Insult

Her family connections may have cost her as a pro. Mendiola, the 2003 Pacific-10 Player of the Year as a junior at Washington, was projected to be a first-round WNBA prospect in 2004. Instead, she went undrafted. It was an insult added to the tumultuous conclusion of her college career. Shortly before Mendiola's senior season, three of her brothers and a brother-in-law were arrested in a murder-conspiracy plot.

After a plea agreement and reduced charges for his siblings, Giovanni Mendiola is serving an eight-year-to-life sentence.

"We've all heard the stories," said Monarchs coach and general manager John Whisenant, who signed Mendiola as a free agent in May 2004. "I personally never had any problems with her family—they were always fine with me—but they got a reputation. They could be pushy."

According to the WNBA, personnel decisions are strictly up to the individual teams. But with scarce jobs and so much talent available to the women's league, positions are hard to keep.

For the 2006 WNBA season, Mendiola will be an unrestricted free agent. She is willing to listen to all offers.

"I just want to play in the WNBA," she said. "That's why I'm doing this—so somebody will notice."

"I go against these guys three hours a day in practice," she said. "Men are just tougher. They're faster and stronger.

Disappointed

Mendiola lasted only one season in the WNBA. Listed with a lumbar strain in 2004, she rotated off Sacramento's injured list. But the spunky guard never got playing time to make a real impression with 39 minutes spread over six games. Her career totals: 10 points (while shooting 50 percent) and five rebounds.

Mendiola admits she was disappointed when no WNBA team picked her up last season. Instead of playing overseas, she decided to take her case to the ABA.

"I'm definitely improving my game," she said. "Out on the court, guys don't care if you're male or female. They see me more and more as just another basketball player."

New York Times News Service

Pistons freeze Heat

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN—The Detroit Pistons showed the Miami Heat that their many moves might not make a difference.

Chauncey Billups scored 30 and Richard Hamilton had 25 points and a season-high nine assists Thursday night leading Detroit past the Heat 106-101 in a rematch of the last season's Eastern Conference finals.

In their first matchup since the Pistons won at Miami in Game 7 of the series, Detroit used clutch shots and key defensive plays in the final minutes to pull away in the close game.

Detroit has won a season-high nine straight games. The Pistons are an NBA-best 24-3, with a 27-game record that trails just two teams in NBA history.

Dwyane Wade had 33 points, Shaquille O'Neal scored 26 and Jason Williams chipped in with 20 points for the Heat, who had won seven of nine games.

Miami added players through free agency and trades in the offseason, and Pat Riley replaced Stan Van Gundy as coach earlier this month.

The Pistons have had the same starting five for nearly two years, a span that includes one NBA title and falling just short of a repeat.

In San Antonio, Michael Finley scored 18 points—including making all four of his 3-point shots—and the Spurs shut down New Orleans' offense after the opening minutes for a 111-84 rout of the Hornets.

The Spurs, who lost to New Orleans earlier this month in Oklahoma City, were 11-for-15 on 3s and their lead grew to as many as 32 points in the fourth quarter.

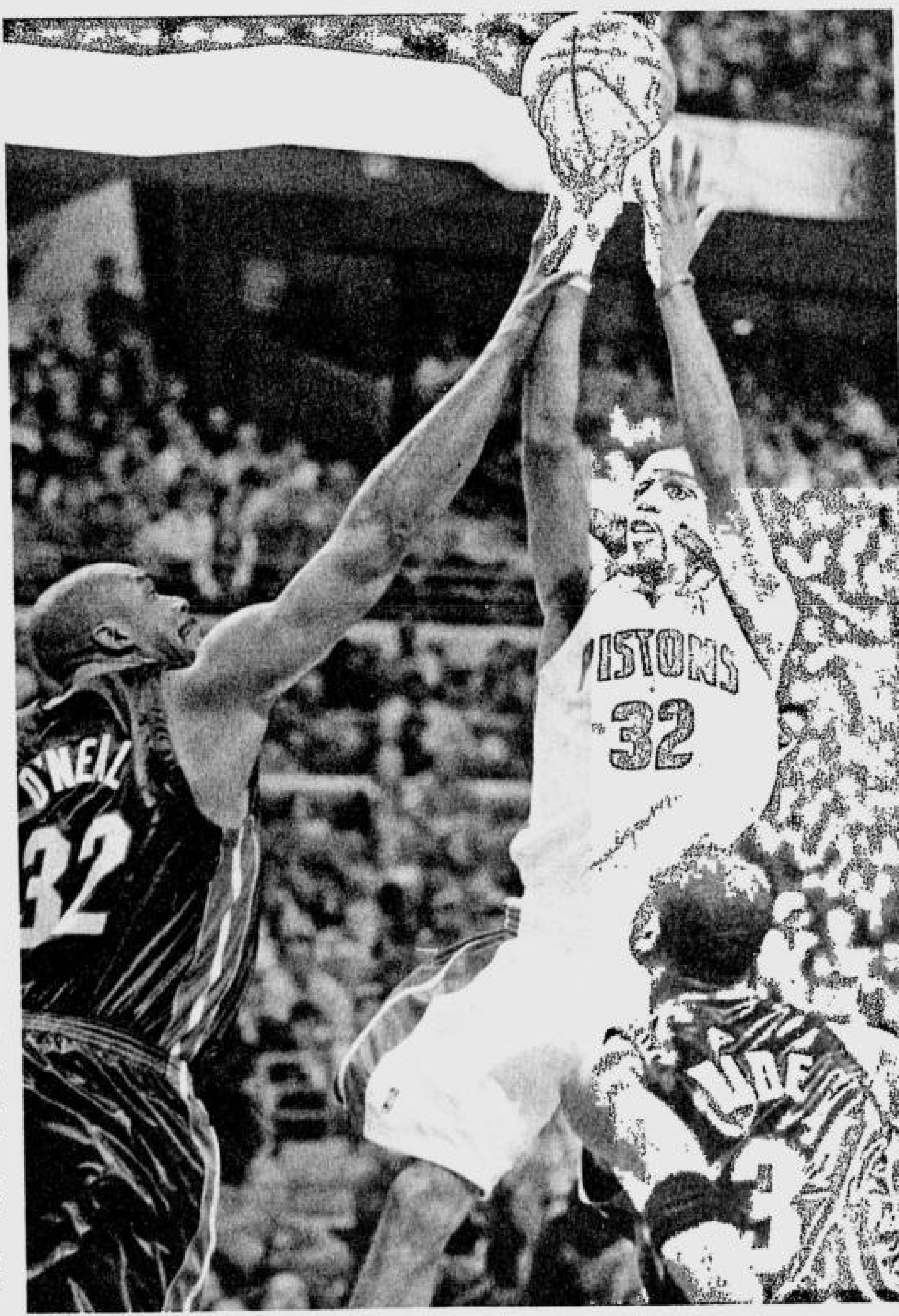
Tim Duncan added 17 points for San Antonio, while Tony Parker had 16 and Manu Ginobili 14.

In Denver, Ray Allen scored a season-high 39 points and Rashard Lewis added 27 in the Seattle SuperSonics' 112-105 victory over the shorthanded Nuggets.

The Nuggets got 32 points from Carmelo Anthony, but Seattle held him to just two free throws in the final 18 minutes.

Denver was without forward Marcus Camby, who underwent surgery Thursday on his broken right pinkie.

NBA on TV: ESPN airs New York Knicks vs Milwaukee Bucks today at 9:30 a.m. (replay at 9:30 p.m.).



DETROIT swingman Richard Hamilton shoots over the Miami dynamic duo of center Shaquille O'Neal (left) and guard Dwyane Wade. AP

'Hit-first' Bryant fails payback bid

KOBE: Ask questions later. REUTERS

LOS ANGELES—There are few players better in the NBA at taking punishment than Kobe Bryant. Just ask Dallas forward Josh Howard, who sent Bryant crashing to the floor on a flagrant foul last week but couldn't derail the superstar guard's 62-point game.

Bryant found himself in a similar situation early in the third quarter of Wednesday's loss to Memphis, taking an elbow to the face from Grizzlies guard Mike Miller that opened an inch-long gash over his left eye.

Maybe this time, though, Bryant was a little too intent on payback. He scored 29 of his 45 points after the Miller elbow but went just 13 of 37 from the field for the game. Bryant took 24 shots from the third quarter on, more than the rest of the Lakers combined.

As a team, the Lakers scored only 16 points aside from Bryant from the third quarter through overtime.

"That overwhelms the game sometimes and makes it difficult for the other guys to function," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. "Kobe has to be aware of that and we talked about it and we understand it. Yet he has to find that balance and there's a fine balance for him."

The NBA also said Thursday it is investigating an elbow Bryant delivered to Miller's chin in retaliation with 8:24 left in the fourth quarter. Bryant was called for a flagrant foul and did not hide his intentions afterward.

"I hit first, ask questions later," Bryant said.

Bryant connected on three 3-pointers in rapid succession after returning to the game in the third with a bandage over his eye. But he missed his last five shots of the quarter, with Jackson saying that he was told Bryant took 10 consecutive shots in the second half.

The issue of Bryant's progress in learning to trust his teammates came up before Wednesday's game. Bryant was none too happy with the Lakers' play late in Monday's loss to Washington and lit into his teammates behind closed doors.

"I think he gave the ball up in various points of the year," Jackson said, "and I think there's been a fine balance between guys stepping up and making shots and Kobe trusting his teammates. It hasn't got to the point where it's not happening, where I'm disappointed."

Bryant, who is averaging a staggering 38.3 points in home games this season, had two chances to win Wednesday's game. He missed a jumper over Dahntay Jones with 15.9 seconds left in regulation and couldn't get a reverse layup to fall in overtime. *New York Times News Service*

Injured Yao leads All-Star balloting

YAO: Toe surgery AFP

NEW YORK—Chinese center Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets remains the top vote recipient in updated National Basketball Association All-Star Game balloting results announced here Thursday.

Yao has 1,319,868 votes in global fan balloting with Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant, the NBA's number two scorer at 32.7 points a game, second with 1,213,387 votes.

Yao, elected a Western Conference All-Star starter by fans in each of his three seasons, is averaging a career-high 19.5 points and 9.1 rebounds a game for Houston, where the 55th NBA All-Star Game will be played on Feb. 19.

But Yao has been sidelined since Dec. 19 following surgery on his left big toe by team physician Tom Clanton to clean out a bone inflammation caused by bacteria.

Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Steve Nash, a Canadian playing for the Phoenix Suns, is second among Western Conference guards with 981,623.

Yao's Rockets teammate Tracy McGrady is the top vote getter among Western Conference forwards with 1,066,013, followed by Kevin Garnett of the Minnesota Timberwolves with 793,078.

Miami Heat center Shaquille O'Neal is the leader among Eastern Conference players with 1,188,830 votes, owning a 37,910-vote lead on Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James.

Jermaine O'Neal of the Indiana Pacers is second among East forwards with 689,526 votes.

Philadelphia's Allen Iverson leads Eastern Conference guards with 1,144,250 votes. *AFP*

Hopman Cup: Netherlands advances

PERTH, AUSTRALIA—THE NETHERlands clinched the final berth in the main draw of the Hopman Cup international mixed teams tennis tournament here Friday with a 2-1 win over China in the opening playoff tie.

It now joins second seeds Argentina, third seed Australia and unseeded favorite Germany in Group B of the eight-nation, $750,000 tournament at Perth's Burswood Dome.

With the tie locked at 1-1 following the singles rubbers, the Dutch pair of Peter Wessels and Michaella Krajicek teamed up to take the deciding mixed doubles, 6-4, 6-4.

The Netherlands had similar success in the playoff tie last year, qualifying for the main draw with a win over Zimbabwe, while China was making its debut in the tournament.

China took the early lead in the tie when 19-year-old Peng Shuai won the opening rubber, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, against the even younger Krajicek in a match lasting just under two hours.

Krajicek, 16, paid the price for too many unforced errors, making 47 for the match compared to 21 by Peng.

But Wessels soon put the Dutch team back on course, taking just 51 minutes to crush China's top-ranked male player Sun Peng, 6-2, 6-2. *Reuters*

Hingis success hinges on service, power

MELBOURNE—FORMER WORLD NO. 1 Martina Hingis has conceded she has no hope of surviving on the women's circuit unless she improves her serve and increases her all-round power.

Swiss Hingis, 25, who retired three years ago with foot and ankle injuries, announced her comeback to tennis this month.

"If I want to play the tennis I played three years ago I would not survive," Hingis said on Friday. "I know that. You have to grow with the game and you have to get better physically and tennis-wise.

"I've been trying to work on my whole game, baseline and serve. You have to have a serve to be able to survive today and we'll see if I can bring it on, like the saying says."

Hingis will be making her grand slam return at next month's Australian Open after playing warmup tournaments on the Gold Coast next week and in Sydney the week after.

The five-time grand slam champion said she had no goals other than to compete at the elite level, although she added she would not have made a comeback if she did not think she could win more grand slam titles.

"You have to believe that down deep otherwise I wouldn't come back. I don't want to set myself into a kind of frame where I would be disappointed or reach over the top," she said.

Hingis said she was inspired to come back for a variety of reasons, including watching Lindsay Davenport's rise to world No. 1 and the revival of Mary Pierce.

"I've had a very nice quiet life back home without the stress and travel but I miss playing," she said. "I'd wake up in the morning and sometimes I'd have no reason to wake up and that's what I was missing. *Reuters*

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SATURDAY Special

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Slick, sexy album from Brian McKnight

By Noelani Torre

R&B CROONER BRIAN MC Knight's newest album, "Gemini," is appropriately named. There are two personas in this slicker than slick 13-tracker—the gentleman *and* the man who just wants to score.

Career

Granted, these are guises that the thirtysomething McKnight has assumed in the course of a decade-long career, but he's chosen to emphasize them this time around. It's a smart move, since it covers up the sometimes jarring shifts that McKnight makes in the album.

Born June 5, 1969, the singer is truly a Gemini, a sign with an unfortunate reputation for capriciousness and duplicity. This particular astrological tidbit is what initially comes to mind when you listen to the album, especially since intro "Stay With Him" has McKnight singing "I never told you that I loved you/ And if I did, baby, I lied."

For those familiar with the songster's background, this *a cappella* number will bring to mind the sound of Take 6, older brother Claude McKnight's vocal group. This is one of the nastier songs in the album—lyrically, that is—what with the singer trying to get rid of a girl-on-the-side by telling her to stay with her main squeeze.

Delivery

When you scrutinize the lyrics, they sound more sleazy than seductive, but it's the delivery that's important, and this acoustic-sounding song has a smooth, classy sheen. It's garnered the singer a Grammy nomination for best male R&B vocal performance.

His lyrics may not always be great, nor his melodies brilliant, but there's real talent lurking under McKnight's glossy surface. He's involved in practically every step of the production—from songwriting to performing and producing—and this results in carefully constructed music that your discriminating ears will no doubt appreciate.

Surprising

McKnight ends the album on a surprising note. Last track "Me and You" has Christ's sacrifice as its subject matter, harking back to the singer's strong gospel roots (his entire family sang in the church choir).

The song rings with sincerity, but it's hard to reconcile the choirboy image conjured up by this song with the previous cuts' smooth-talking lover.

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Filmfest entries underscore need to reevaluate MMFF

By Rito P. Asilo

"Ako Legal Wife"

D: Joel Lamangan
S: Zsa Zsa Padilla, Cherry Pie Picache, Rufa Mae Quinto

NOW SHOWING

THIS YEAR'S CROP OF METRO Manila Film Festival entries is a disappointing mix of "win some, lose more" cinematic confections.

Joel Lamangan's "Ako Legal Wife," for example, must have largely earned its grade-B rating from the CEB for the feisty performances of its lead stars. Unfortunately, good acting is not the be-all and end-all of cinema:

In Lamangan's latest film, Zsa Zsa Padilla delivers a comedic triumph, and goes to town with her zany *and* textured thespic romp as Chona, the first—and legal—wife of the incorrigibly and unapologetically adulterous *Tsinoy* entrepreneur, Elton Chong (Jay Manalo).

As Chona agonizes over the extramarital, extracurricular antics of her hubby, she huffs, puffs—and plots to "annihilate" the competition: Patty (Cherry Pie Picache), Elton's defiant Chinese-Visayan "second" wife.

The two warring women, however, declare a truce when they find out that the bosomy Gloria (Rufa Mae Quinto), has joined the tumultuous fray!

But, even after 22 years of constant bickering, these women don't see beyond the obvious: For men like Elton, beauty, loyalty, domestic bliss, bedroom prowess—even "backbreaking" surgical procedures—are never enough to quench a cad's thirst for exciting sexual adventures.

Picache's verve and thespic pizzazz are on fine display here, but her shaky, inconsistent Visayan twang taints her otherwise plucky, rollicking performance.

Yes, Cherry Pie occasionally falters, *but* when she hits her stride (as when she has to greet friends "Happy *Nyo Yir!*" in all her deadpan splendor), she runs away with the scene! For her part, despite an underwritten character and limited screen time, Rufa Mae also does well. But, she isn't really asked to do more than her usual adorable, ditzy shtick.

FILMFEST/ A2-2

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'PBB' gears up for celebrity edition in February

By Nestor U. Torre

IT'S QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE WHY ABS-CBN is making such a big to-do over its "Pinoy Big Brother" challenge. The four-month test has not been matched by front-runner GMA-7, so it's ABS-CBN's way of scoring much-needed points in the ratings game.

So, even if the challenge has already picked a winner in gutsy and cheery Nene, ABS-CBN continues to trot-out its "housemates" on various programs, further building up their popularity. Why, they even have a drama special in the works, to launch them as "serious" performers!

Public consciousness

All this, to keep "PBB" in the public consciousness, in preparation for its second edition in February, which will have *celebrities* as housemates.

Initially, the news that celebrities would comprise the next batch of "PBB" contenders came across as a brilliant casting coup. After all, Filipinos are fiercely celebrity-oriented, so they can be expected to avidly watch the new "PBB" challenge, especially if its housemates include the rambunctious, unpredictable likes of Rosanna Roces, who is reported to have auditioned for a slot on the new edition.

On second thought, however, the celebrity gambit could prove to be too much to handle for the show's production team—not to mention the godlike Big Brother himself, whose "powers" could be sorely tested by celebrities

'PBB'/ A2-3

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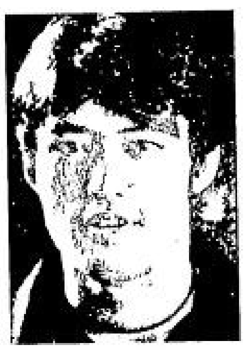
12:05, 2:35, 5:05,
PG-13

2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
1:20, 3:45, 6:10
GP

3 EXODUS
12:35, 3:05, 5:35
GP

4 KUTOB
1:20, 3:45, 6:10
PG-13



FERNANDEZ. Acting showcase.

Filmfest

From page A2-1

Lamangan's film is riproaring fun, *but* that's about it. **"Ako Legal Wife"** is as riotously entertaining as it is thematically vacuous—general characteristics that typify many of this year's MMFF entries:

Erik Matti's **"Exodus"** boasts of stunning visuals, but it has a confounding, reed-thin story.

Dominic Zapata's **"Mulawin"** fares better at storytelling—but, its special effects are patchy.

On the other hand, the latest **"Shake, Rattle and Roll"** trilogy may be trite and derivative, but it has a gem in Richard Somes' hair-raising ghost town episode, "Ang Lihim ng San Joaquin"—which showcases one of the festival's best performances by an actor, turned in by Mark Anthony Fernandez.

Like Fernandez, Marvin Agustin wisely dodges the temptation to play his psychologically unstable character big and hammy in Jose Javier Reyes' **"Kutob,"** a serviceable albeit predictable psychological slasher flick with obvious references to Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho."

Agustin—sympathetic and unnerving as the film's socially inept protagonist, Lemuel—invests the production with a portrayal that helps transcend it's "stalk, chase,

FILMFEST/ A2-3

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
MTRCB: GP
12:20, 2:45, 5:10PM

2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
MTRCB: GP
12:00, 2:30, 5:00PM

3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
MTRCB: PG-13
12:20, 2:45, 5:10PM

4 EXODUS
MTRCB: GP
11:40, 2:10, 4:40PM

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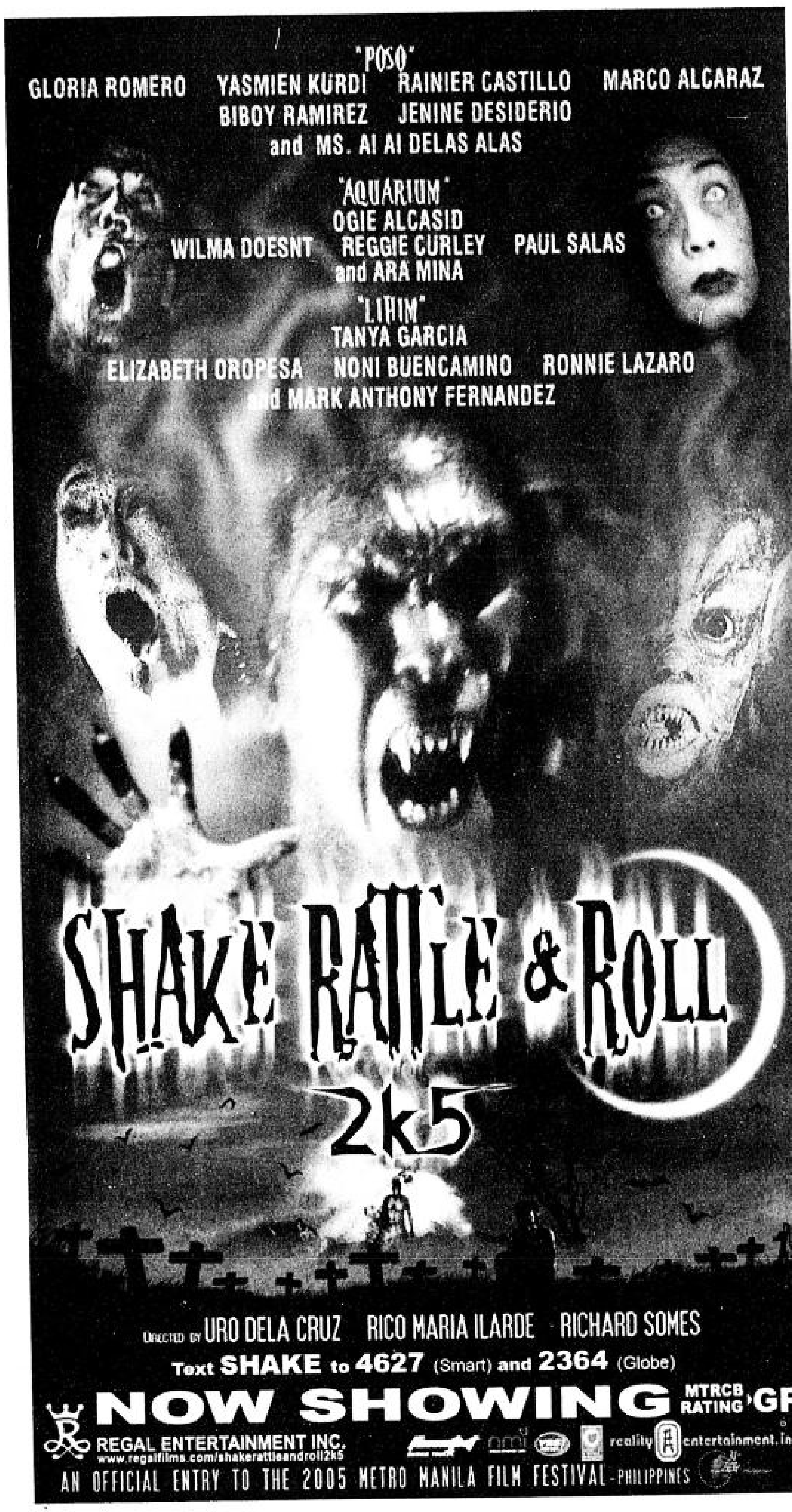
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BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
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WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA
"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
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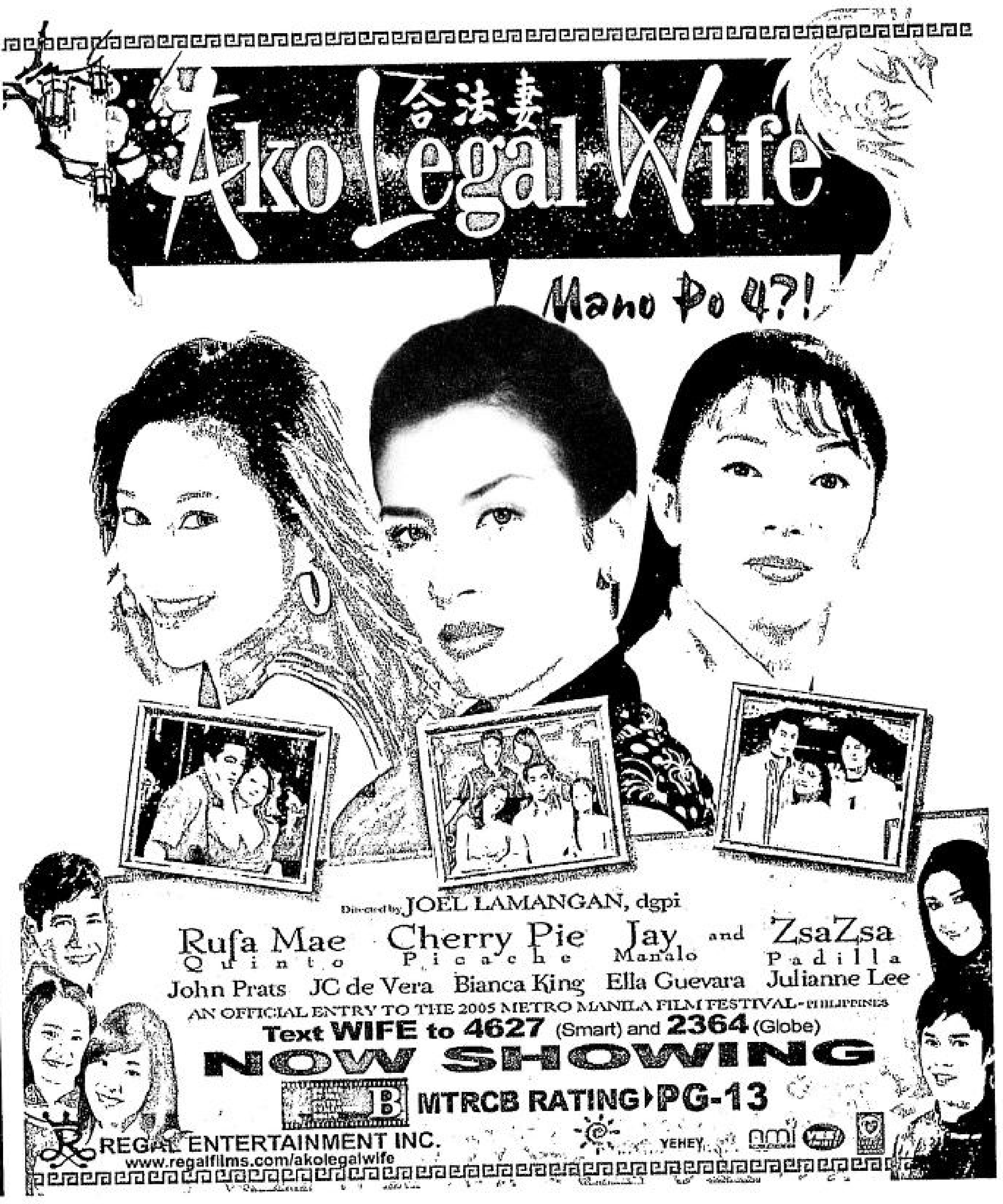
Ako Legal Wife
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Mano Po 4?!
Directed by JOEL LAMANGAN, dgpi
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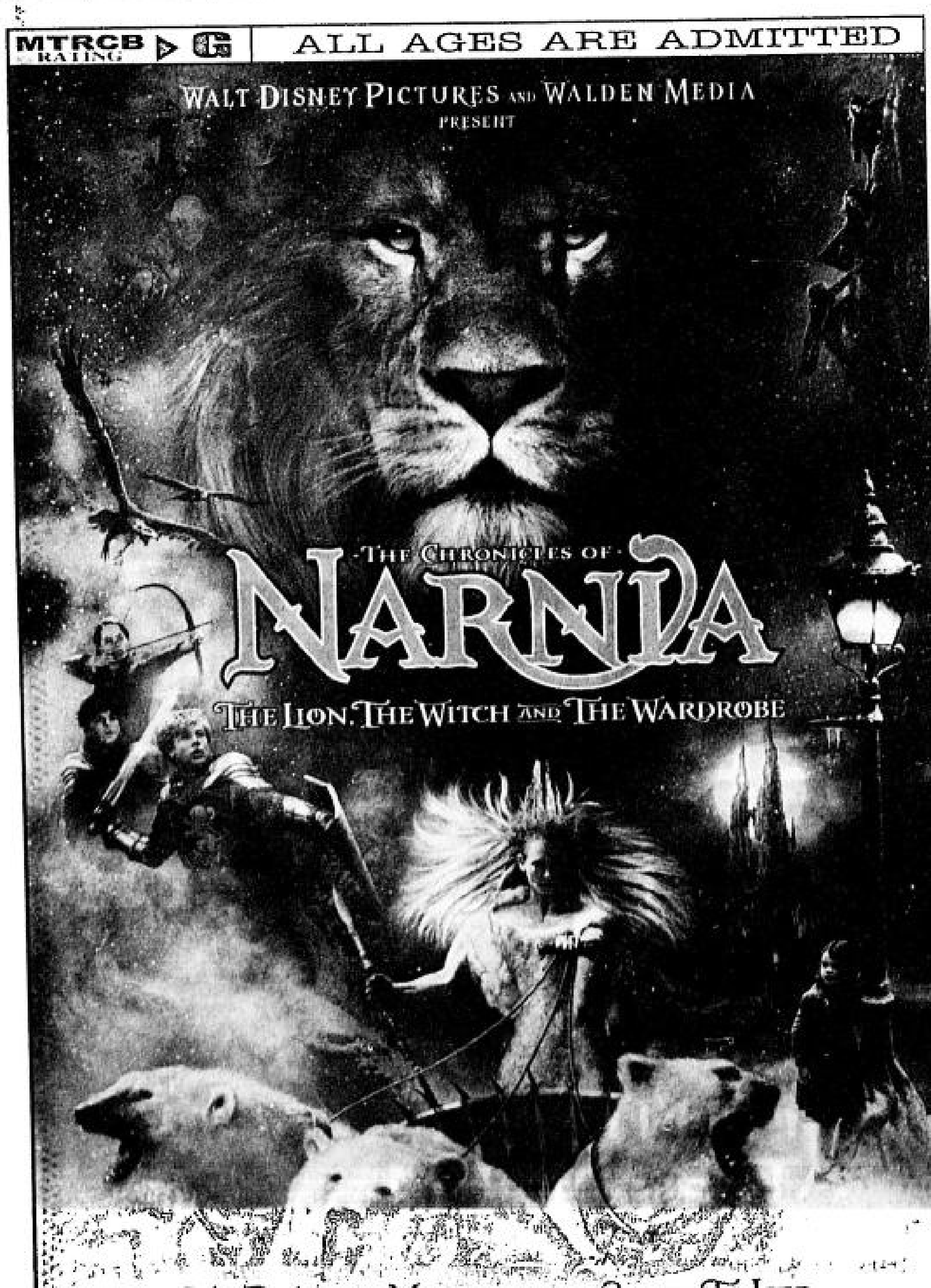
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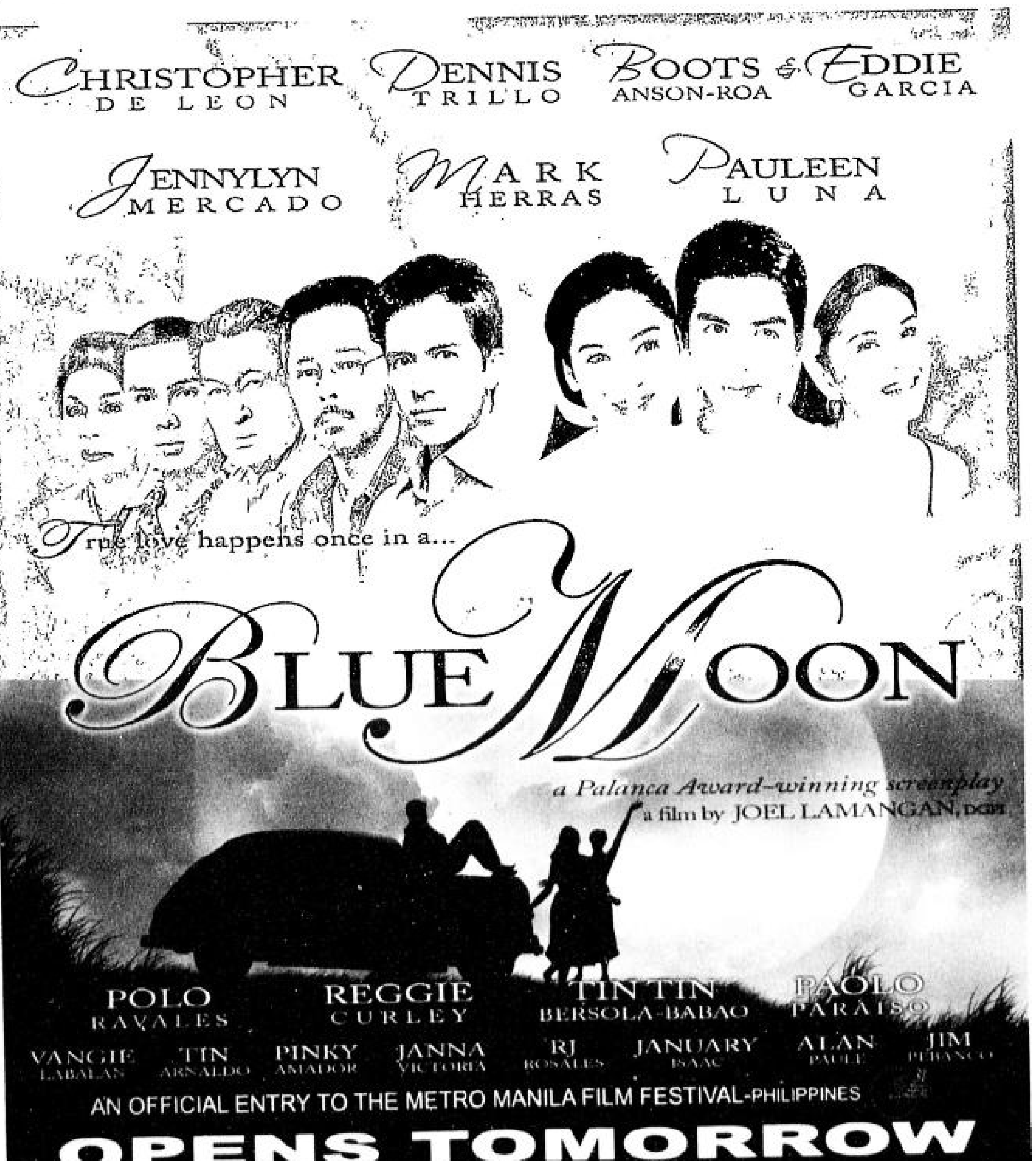
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Fervent wishes for the New Year

By Behn Cervantes

USUALLY, PEOPLE OF GOOD will wish only the best for their friends and loved ones on the advent of every New Year. But, some of our most fervent wishes have been unfulfilled for years.

On the other hand, these people share thier speical wishes for the entertainment scene:

"I wish that the government would truly support the ailing movie industry."—*Barbara Perez*

PEREZ. Government support for the movie industry.

"I wish that the Cultural Center would be granted the proper subsidy, so that it can balance its annual budget."—*Nes Jardin, Chair of the Cultural Center of the Philippines*

"I wish TV networks would put a stop to the recycling of telenovelas from Taiwan and Korea in Tagalog. *'Nawawalan ng trabaho ang mga artistang Pilipino. Mas mahuhusay at magaganda naman sila, di ba?"* —*Larry Agunday*

"I wish local entertainment would get out of the rut it's been in for years. I am sick and tired of stars saying *"Manood kayo ng aming pelikula sapagkat umiyak si (popular actor) sa pelikulang ito.'* Big deal! Is the ability to cry the height of acting?"—*Amiel Leonardia*

"I wish the local entertainment industry would utilize trained actors and entertainers instead of making instant stars of every beauty queen and model."—*Corazon Villagracia*

"Enough of 'Pinoy Big Brother'! It's turning nosey people into voyeurs! Don't they have better things to do?" Enough of these reality shows! Isn't our reality bad enough?—*Monette Flores*

"I wish more Filipinos would patronize good films!"—*Tony Mabesa*

'PBB'

From page A2-1

who aren't used to taking orders from anybody.

Indeed, other reality shows like GMA-7's "Extra Challenge" have had celebrity contestants, with decidedly mixed results. Some have followed rules, but some "*pasaway*" stars have flouted them with bitchy impunity.

The point is, if those errant stars proved to be too much to handle for a show that took only a few days to tape, imagine how they would behave if they were "imprisoned" for 100 days?!

Dilemma

So, that's the dilemma that faces the celebrity "PBB" edition. It needs spirited stars to keep its telecasts interesting, but if the stars are too disobedient, the show could be in big trouble.

Of course, since the "PBB" episodes are taped, the production could always bleep or edit out the stars' potentially shocking or off-putting comments and actuations.

But, with some celebrities, particularly those who suffer from cabin fever, the daily battle of wits and snits could be exceedingly stressful.

So, "Celebrity PBB"? —Go for it! But, choose stars who can stay the course without freaking out—and driving everybody else up the wall, as well!

Filmfest

From page A2-2

slice and dice" limitations.

These motion pictures have strong elements that help deflect the moviegoing public's attention away from their narrative, technical or thematic implausibilities and shortcomings.

But, if the organizers behind the festival truly want to help the ailing local film industry, do they *really* think this year's entries are tangible representatives of movies that are deemed to be of "festival quality"? If not, then it's time for the MMFF to reevaluate its ideals—and its reason for being!

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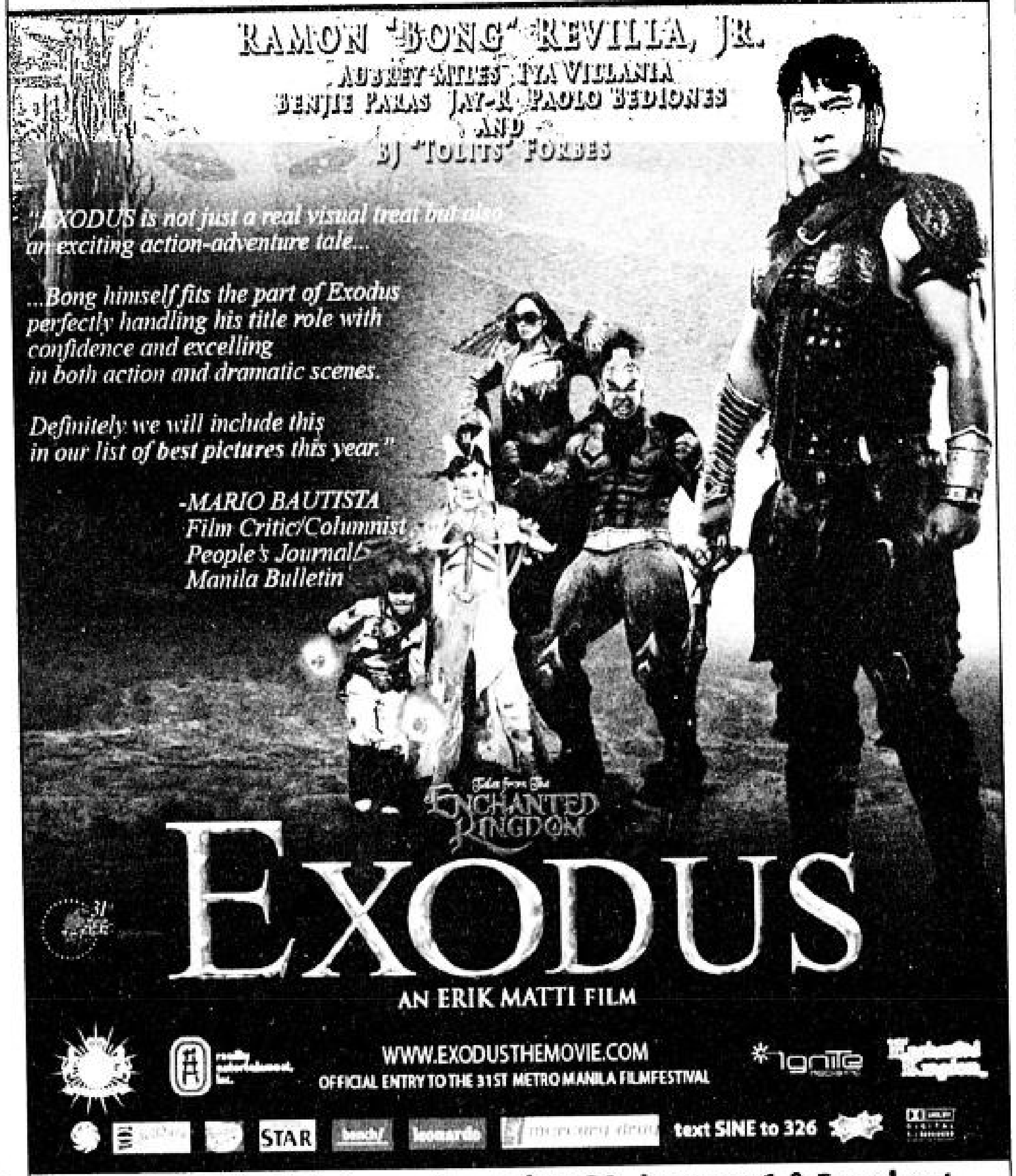
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Film Critic/Columnist
People's Journal/
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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS	
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1 AKO LEGAL WIFE • THX 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	6 MULAWIN 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 EXODUS 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	7 TERRORIST HUNTER 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	8 EXODUS 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30
4 KUTOB 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	10 MULAWIN 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE	10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 KUTOB 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 MULAWIN 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00	6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
4 TERRORIST HUNTER 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30	7 EXODUS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05	5 AKO LEGAL WIFE 10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05
2 EXODUS 2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15	6 TERRORIST HUNTER 2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20	7 KUTOB 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20
4 MULAWIN 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	8 EXODUS 11:25 1:45 4:05 6:25 8:45

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1 EXODUS
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STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

ON JAN. 15, FROM 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Westin Philippine Plaza, Lillian Too visits Manila for the first time to talk about what the year of the Fire Dog has in store for us. She will share valuable insight into what 2006 offers in terms of work, success potential, opportunities, health issues, love and romance.

Career

Too has an MBA degree from Harvard Business School. She was at the top of her career when she quit her job to become a full-time mother and pursue her passion for writing. She has since written over 80 best-selling books on *feng shui*.

Analysis

Lillian insists that her individualized readings, detailed month-by-month luck analysis, and suggested remedies and cures to avert misfortunes are effective.

She explains, "I don't treat *feng shui* as magical or spiritual!" She founded the World of Feng Shui boutiques.

Host

In the Philippines, Maritess C.B. Allen will host the 2006 Feng Shui Extravaganza. Call 914-7888 or 916-0000 or inquire at Rustan's, TicketNet and Ticketworld outlets.

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ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES **GP** 12:50,3:10,5:30	**SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K4** **PG13** 12:45,3:05,5:25	**EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM** **GP** 12:40,3:00,5:20

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SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 1:35 / 2:10 / 4:05 / 4:40 / 6:35 / 7:10	
MULAWIN 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10	**AKO, LEGAL WIFE** 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 11:35 / 1:30 / 2:05 / 4:00 / 4:35 / 6:30 / 7:05	**KUTOB** 12:25 / 2:40 / 4:55 / 7:10

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❶ **ENTENG KABISOTE 2** 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30	❹ **TERRORIST HUNTER** 12:00 / 2:00 / 4:00 / 6:00
❷ **MULAWIN** 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35	❺ **AKO LEGAL WIFE** 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35
❸ **KUTOB** 12:15 R4 / 1:30 / 3:45 / 6:00	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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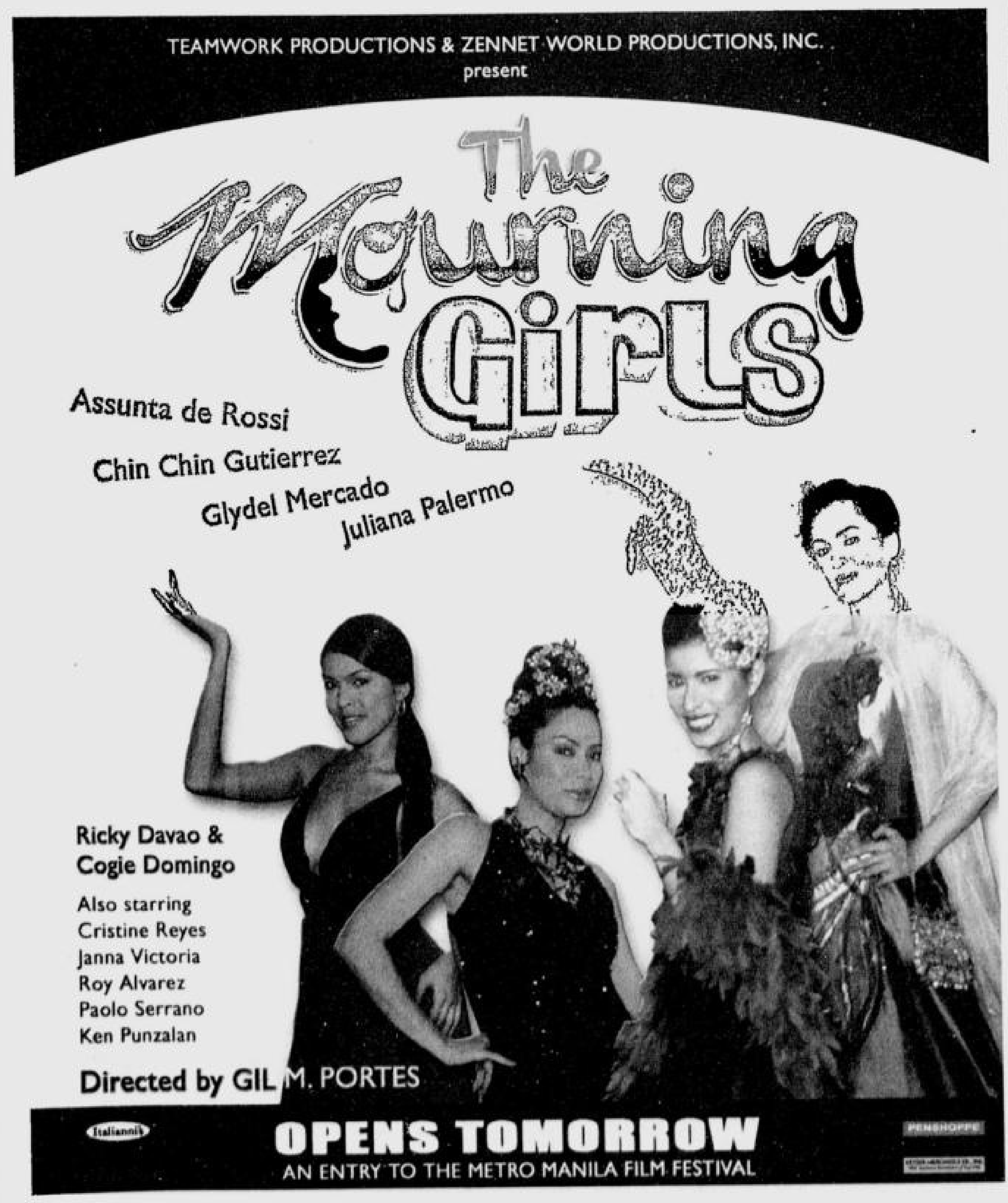

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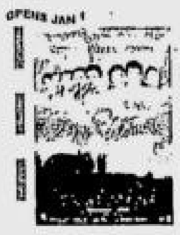

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The Palanca Award Winning love story of following one's heart

•Blue Moon•

OPENS JAN 1

Two siblings found each other after all the consequences

•Lagot Ka Sa Kuya Ko•

OPENS JAN 1

Find out the man these four ladies have in common

•Mourning Girls•

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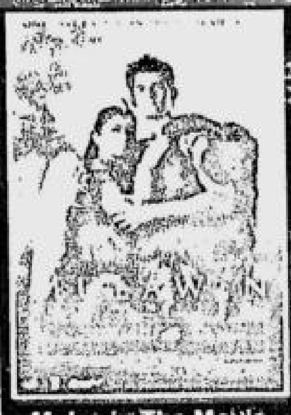

Mulawin The Movie

Here's your chance to meet and greet the stars of Mulawin The Movie On JANUARY 1 at the following SM Supermalls Manila, Sta. Mesa, Megamall

Lagot Ka Sa Kuya Ko

Here's your chance to meet and greet the stars of Lagot Ka Sa Kuya Ko on JANUARY 1 at the following SM Supermalls Fairview, North EDSA, San Lazaro, and Valenzuela

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2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
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4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 KUTOB
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 TERRORIST HUNTER
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 EXODUS
10 EXODUS
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 KUTOB
9 TERRORIST HUNTER
10 EXODUS

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS

1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 EXODUS
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 EXODUS
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 EXODUS
11 KUTOB
12 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 EXODUS
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 EXODUS
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 KUTOB
10 TERRORIST HUNTER

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 EXODUS
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5

1 EXODUS
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KUTOB
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 EXODUS

SM CITY MANILA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 EXODUS
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 TERRORIST HUNTER
10 KUTOB
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
12 EXODUS

SM SAN LAZARO
1 EXODUS
2 KUTOB
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 EXODUS
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 EXODUS
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 EXODUS
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BACOOR
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KUTOB
5 EXODUS
6 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 EXODUS
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 EXODUS
2 KING KONG
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY LUCENA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 KUTOB
3 KING KONG
4 EXODUS

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 KING KONG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 KUTOB
7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
8 EXODUS

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 EXODUS
2 KING KONG
3 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 EXODUS

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Fresh start for Nora Aunor

By Nestor U. Torre

NORA AUNOR'S FANS ARE HAPPY TO HEAR that she has secured some sort of plea bargain in the States that gets her off the hook in her pending drug case.

Instead of going through a trial, she's going into a year-long behavior modification and counseling program that seeks to confront not only addiction issues, but other psychological problems, as well.

This is great news, because the Superstar's loyal followers want to keep her out of legal trouble at all cost, and the reeducation program offers a respectable way out of one of the worst fixes in which Nora has found herself in her awesomely colorful life.

Attention span

They hope that the actress, who is known to have a rather short attention span, will force herself to stick to the year-long program, so the court will clear her of all charges, and she can come home and perform in new productions here.

For our part, we see this latest development not just as a legal way out for Nora, but also as a golden opportunity, a fresh start to finally get a handle on her roller-coaster life.

Nora has been involved in more controversial situations than many people, and some observers think that this reveals her lack of "gratitude" for all of the blessings that stardom has brought her.

We don't agree. We think that Nora has had such an erratic life and career, not because she isn't appreciative, but because fame came to her when she was still an adolescent, and therefore, much too young to know how to handle it.

Add to this the fact that she was so impoverished, and wasn't well-educated—then, all of a sudden, she was the toast of the show biz world, adored by millions, making huge amounts of money, attracting all sorts of "instant relatives" and hangers-on, and being exploited by people who pretended to help her!

Confounding situation

—How would *we* cope if we were in such a confounding situation at such an early age?

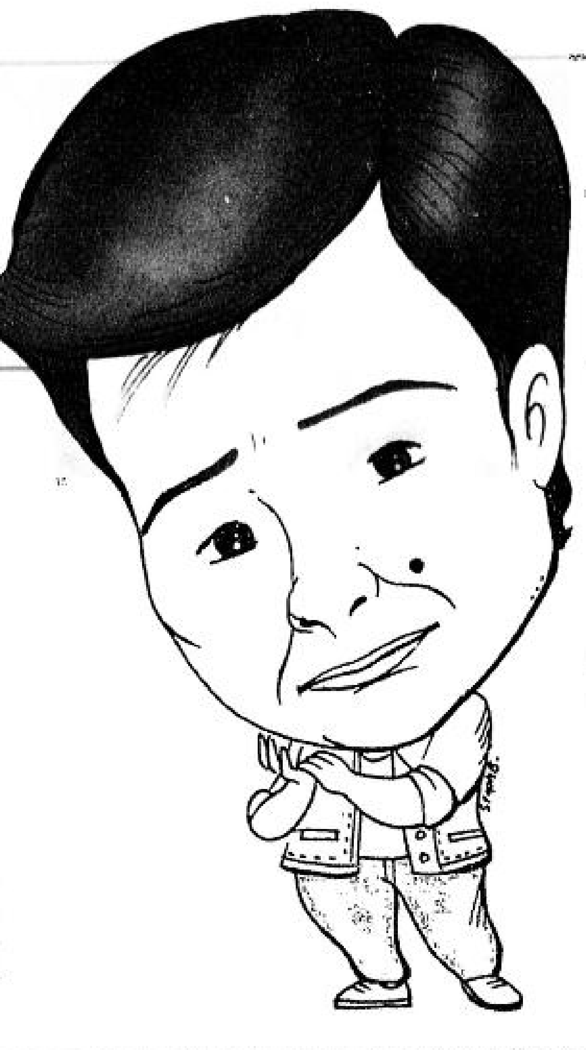
So, as Nora made one mistake after another in her career, we tried to understand why she was behaving so erratically, and sometimes, so self-destructively.

Now that the actress is going into her behavior modification program, we hope that she will take advantage of this chance for her to deal not only with addiction issues, but also with the other conflicts in her life.

If she really sticks to the program, she could finally sort out the many conflicting factors that have negatively affected her career and personal relationships.

Now that she's in her 50s, she really has to get her house in order, so that she can become more creative and productive in the coming years.

Nora has achieved so much in her stellar career, but we believe that the best is yet to come—*if* she uses her year-long program to finally get to the core of her problems—and their solutions.



CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

AUNOR. The best is yet to come.

HERMOSA. Follows her heart when she makes important decisions.

Stars look forward to 2006

By Jocelyn Valle

THEY HOGGED HEADLINES IN 2005: Kristine Hermosa moved to nullify her heretofore secret marriage to Diether Ocampo; Bing Loyzaga ended her silence about the breakdown of her marriage with Janno Gibbs; Iya Villania's car was stolen by a carjacking syndicate and was later recovered by the police; and Chynna Ortaleza shed her inhibitions to pose for a men's magazine.

What have they learned from those experiences?

"At least, *hindi naging* boring *ang* 2005 *ko,*" Kristine looks back with a chuckle. *"Mas madrama pa kaysa mga* soap opera *na ginagawa ko sa* TV, *'di ba?"*

Leading lady

Turning serious, Vic Sotto's leading lady in the Metro filmfest entry, "Enteng Kabisote," shares that she follows her heart when she makes important decisions. "I choose whatever makes me happy. *Mas masarap ang maging masaya kaysa mag-*dwell sa negative thoughts," she adds.

Kristine is upbeat about the New Year: *"Hindi lahat ng mangyayari sa buhay natin, masaya. Meron talagang pagdadaanang hirap. Isipin na lang natin kung ano'ng ating matutunan ,"* she declares.

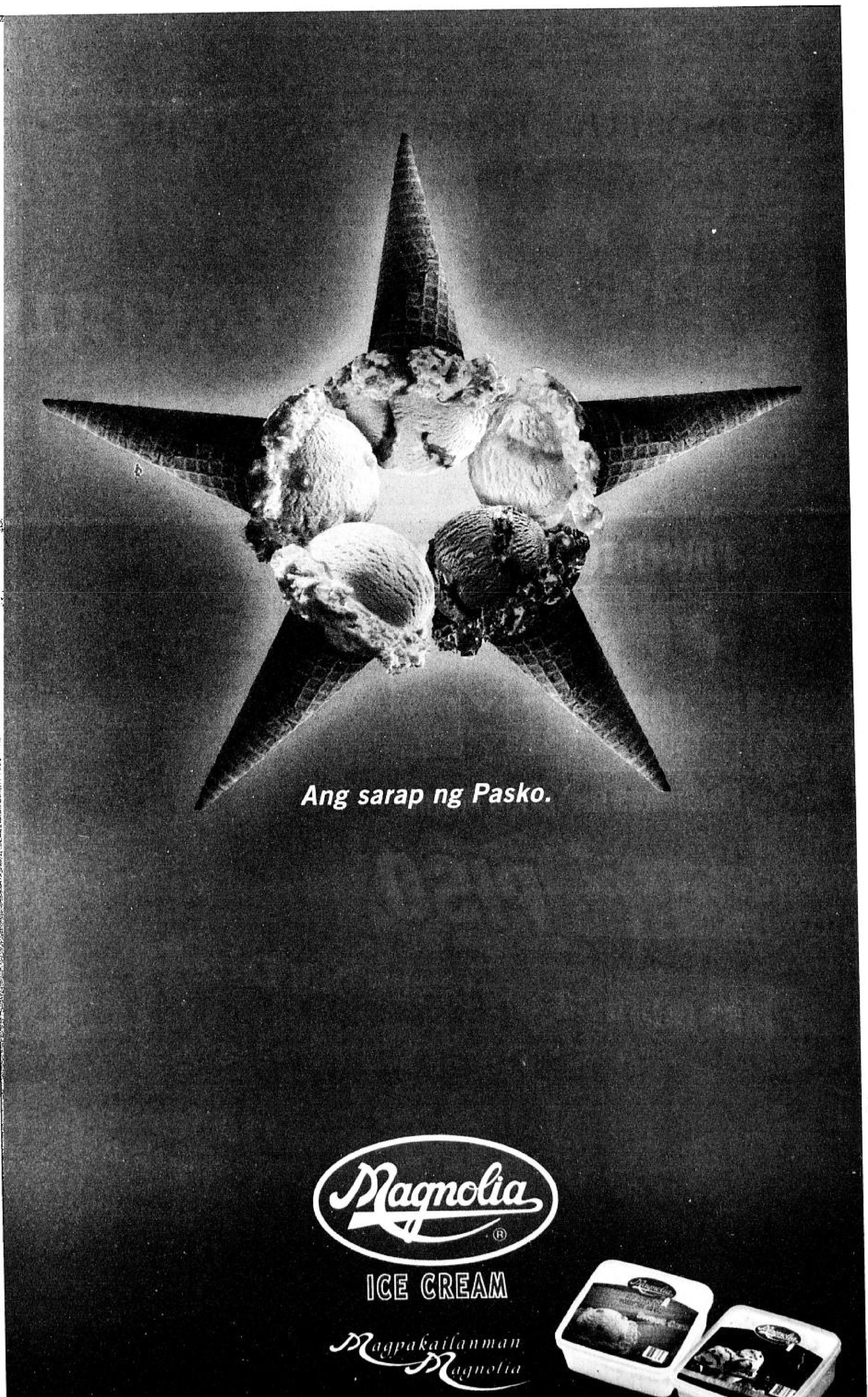
For her part, Loyzaga may be single again, but she says she's learned to love herself more. For starters, she's decided to focus on her career. She appears in both "Enteng" and "Kutob," and is part of the afternoon soap, "Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako."

Fears

On the other hand, Iya admits to being traumatized by the carjacking incident. *"Medyo praning ako* these days. I always check if the car doors are locked. But, I try hard not to let my fears rule my life," she points out.

"This year, I want to be more independent and make wiser decisions—especially in handling money and dividing my time," Iya stresses.

Similarly, Chynna has also learned to take risks and try different things—like doing her sexy spread for a men's magazine. She's also accepted a *kontrabida* role on the TV show, "Sugo," and has gone back to school. "Hopefully, 2006 will be an even better year for me and my career," she beams.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Mythology and reality in notable films

By Rito P. Asilo

ON JAN. 8, ANDREW ADAMSON, who has steered the "Shrek" movies to commercial and critical success, helms the long-awaited big-screen adaptation of C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," while highly esteemed indie filmmaker, Thomas Bezucha (2000's "Big Eden"), welcomes the New Year with movies that capture the imagination and warm the heart.

Allegorical tale

Adamson's take on Lewis' spiritual, allegorical tale is visually stunning and emotionally uplifting: Set in World War II in 1940, the Pevensie siblings, Peter (14), Susan (12), Edmund (10) and Lucy (eight), are whisked off to the country home of Prof. Digory Kirke (Jim Broadbent) to protect them from incessant air raids in London.

In a secluded nook of the elderly professor's house, Lucy finds a cloaked wardrobe that serves as a gateway to the magical world of Narnia, a parallel universe inhabited by talking fauns, foxes and beavers, a benevolent lion deity called Aslan (appropriately voiced by Liam Neeson), and his nemesis, Jadis, the wicked White Witch (Tilda Swinton)—and Father Christmas himself!

PARKER. Award-worthy performance in "The Family Stone."

The siblings—prophesied to end Narnia's 100-year winter—have to work hand in hand with Aslan to end the scurrilous reign of the cunning witch, who also outlaws music and the observance of Christmas! And so, the neverending battle between good and evil escalates!

This Christian parable—featuring biblical themes of death, resurrection and redemption—is given extra heft by the cast's involved performances.

Narnia is no Middle Earth, but the evil that lurks in its world is no less terrifying, and exemplifies the challenges that we face in our daily lives.

Furthermore, despite the film's admirable CG moments, the director focuses more on the relationships between characters, and on the values the film's young protagonists learn—and unlearn.

Initial buzz

On the other hand, the initial buzz on "The Family Stone" was focused on the allegedly Oscar-worthy performance of Diane Keaton.

Indeed, the veteran actress delivers another winner, but it's really Sarah Jessica Parker who shines brightest in the film. She plays Meredith, an uptight, business-savvy career woman, whose world is turned upside down when fiancé Everett (Dermot Mulroney) takes her home to meet his quirky family—the Stones—for the Christmas holidays. (Parker's gutsy performance has since been cited by the Golden Globes.)

Even before Meredith can step into the family household, however, the hostile reception, icy stares and obvious disapproval in the air cut through her steely exterior—down to her sturdy stilettos!

Worsening condition

To salvage the worsening condition, she tries everything to please the Stones, but she only ends up achieving the opposite. To her dismay, the situation takes a turn for the worse!

You may have heard similar stories in the past, but Bezucha's three-hanky comedy-drama puts a fresh spin on the familiar tragic-comic tale, that is further energized by the alternatingly hilarious and touching performances of Parker, Keaton, Mulroney, Rachel McAdams (as the bitchy sister), Ty Giordano (as the gay, deaf brother), Claire Danes (as Meredith's sister) and Luke Wilson (as Everett's brother, who's attracted to Meredith).

The wonderful ensemble seamlessly shifts from comedy to drama—an instructive lesson in versatility and ensemble acting!

Retrospective honors Pete Lacaba

By Jocelyn Valle

RICKY DAVAO HAS NEVER ACTed in a movie penned by Pete Lacaba, but he nonetheless agreed to participate in a retrospective honoring the revered wordsmith last month at the NewsDesk Café in Quezon City.

Ricky, who came straight from shooting, read a poem, "Sa Mga Gabi," and sang the Filipino translation of the well-loved French tune, "La Vie En Rose." He also opened the jamming session with two Filipino love songs.

Passion for singing

Ricky recalled meeting Pete at a show biz function years ago, and they became fast friends because of their shared passion for singing. "Classmates *kami sa* sing-along bars," he quipped.

Ricky said Pete's talent is sorely missed in the entertainment industry. "All that's needed is a good opportunity," he pointed out.

LACABA. Wrote the screenplays of "Sister Stella L." and "Orapronobis."

Pete wrote the screenplays of the film classics, "Sister Stella L" and "Orapronobis," whose strong socio-political views reflected his own convictions. He was a reporter of the Philippine Free Press who fought the Marcos dictatorship, for which he was detained and tortured.

In 1999, he was cited as one of the country's 100 "Bayani ng Sining."

New poem

Pete indulged the audience at the retrospective with a new poem inspired by his turning 60 the day before the show, which he then called "Senior Citizen," and an old work, "Bangungot," which, he said, he wrote before the '70s. He also crooned the popular song, "She," in Filipino.

Other performers included visual artist Danny Dalena, Horacio Guillermo, Sigfried Sanchez, Ana Achocoso and Pete's brother, Billy, who recited two poems.

According to NewsDesk's Psyche Roxas-Mendoza, the project "started as a book re-launch of 'Kung Baga sa Bigas: Mga Piling Tula.' After one meeting, the idea metamorphosed into 'Pete Lacaba Retrospektib,' complete with movie stars and other heavyweights from the media and literary spheres.

Readers

"Pete Lacaba Retrospektib: Buhay at Panahon ni Jose F. Lacaba" was held with different sets of readers and performers. "Orapronobis" star Gina Alajar headed the guests on the first night, and Radioactive Sago Project's Lourd de Veyra led the program the following night.

Least welcome Christmas gifts recalled

By Nestor U. Torre

WHAT'S THE WORST CHRISTmas gift you ever got? We did a group interview of friends, relatives and celebrities right after Christmas, and got an earful:

"I once got a big box that was very nicely decorated. Eagerly, I opened it—and found that it was empty! My friend had given me a *prop* Christmas present! Grrrr…"

"During one Kris Kringle gift-giving session, my Kringle gifted me with—the raw leg of a native chicken! The leg was almost black in color, and let me tell you, it was the most disgusting thing!"

"My Kris Kringle gift was really heavy, so I thought I had struck gold. Alas, when I opened the box, it contained—a hollow block! No wonder it was so heavy…"

Photo albums

"My husband once gave me a set of photo albums. What's so awful about that? Well, I hated it, because he had been after me for months to put our photos into albums—so the gift was actually for *him*, not for me!"

"While we're at it, I want to urge your readers *never* to give kitchenware or cooking appliances as Christmas gifts. Give them to the *kitchen*, *not* to your wife. For her, you must get personal non-utilitarian items not related to housework!"

"For my part, I always wince when a friend gives me a religious item, bible or spiritual literature for Christmas. I know my friend means well—he or she wants to save my soul—but, Christmas gifts should be less holier-than-thou.

"I know this sounds insensitive, because Christmas does celebrate the birth of the Son of God—but (most of) you know what I mean."

"At the top of *my* list of worst gifts is—*masangsang na* perfume!"

"I got my worst gift at a party where the sexes got all mixed up. I'm a guy, but the gift box I got contained a panty and bra set!"

"I really didn't appreciate it very much when a friend gave me—a can opener."

"One Christmas, a stingy in-law gave all of us in our family the same gift: a calendar. How 'imaginative' and 'personal' could you get?! To get back at her, the following Christmas, we all gave her calendars. She was up to her ears in calendars! Tit for tat—and I think a lesson was learned!"

Appreciative

"When I was 10 years old, somebody gave me an egg timer for Christmas—and I didn't even like eggs! Naturally, I wasn't very appreciative. It's the thought that counts? Well, there was very little thought that went into my gift."

"I hate it when stars and starlets give me gifts with their names or faces emblazoned all over the giveaway promo items. Not only are many of them lousy and chintzy gifts, but you can't even give them away to other losers—unless they happen to be diehard fans of the stars and starlets in question."

"I too have received some pretty yukky gifts. But, I think we need to put these things in perspective. Like, I once got a Mines View Park stone with a ballpen sticking out of it—really bad, huh? Yet, I was still glad I got it, because it came from my *yaya*, and everytime I see it now, I think of her—fondly."

Outrageous

"Sexy Christmas gifts are particularly dicey. They're fun in an outrageous sort of way, but they can also be gross. Like, do you know that there's a Santa doll that, if you pull a tab, drops his pants and his you-know-what is exposed, and he goes 'Ho, ho, ho!?' I mean—it's *Santa Claus!*"

At the end of the group interview, somebody asked *us* what our worst gift was, and we replied that it could be a coin purse made out of a dried frog's skin that we got one weird Christmas.

We thought that was a topper, but one of our interviewees dismissed it. "That's nothing," she scoffed. "I once got a Kangaroo scrotum pouch from Australia!" How—ab-original!

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Promo period from: Dec. 17, 2005 - Jan. 15, 2006. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 7211, Series of 2005.

Reinvention time for established stars

By Nestor U. Torre

FOR ESTABLISHED STARS OF Philippine entertainment who are in their late 30s or 40s, it's reinvention time. It really won't do for them to hang on to the image or performance style that worked for them in their younger years.

Productive years

Established stars who are able to do this can look forward to many more productive years in the biz. On the other hand, those who hold on to the past run the risk of looking like they're in denial—or worse, like caricatures of their younger stellar selves.

Particularly vulnerable in this department are "kooky" stars who are now sliding (or being pulled, kicking and screaming) into their "matronic" years.

Maricel Soriano used to have a problem in this regard some seasons ago. Happily she's since toned down her performances, and she's now properly mature in her portrayal of the protagonist in her ongoing *telenovela,* "Vietnam Rose."

Aga Muhlach is another star who needs to reassess his options as he continues to mature. In his last film, "Dubai," he played John Lloyd Cruz's older brother, but some of his mannerisms were holdovers from his younger portrayals.

While the effect in "Dubai" was still tolerable, Aga and his think tank should carefully plan his next career moves to make sure that his roles keep pace with his maturing looks.

Illusion

Yes, Aga is still dishy, and the fact that he has very young children helps keep up the illusion of "eternal" youth. But, he must eventually accept the reality that it *is* an illusion, so his next portrayals should be less boy-next-door.

The savvy shift has worked for the likes of Christopher de Leon, who's busy acting to this day. So, this could be an effective ploy for Aga and his contemporaries as well.

Sharon Cuneta is another established star who's at a crossroads in her career. She's taken time off *and* put on weight to become a mom for the third time, and she's now preparing to make a comeback.

Aside from going on a diet to look svelte again, Sharon is making some career adjustments: In the movies, she's turning producer, getting involved behind the camera on productions like "La Visa Loca."

On TV, she's poised to host a new show. But, will it be a musical-variety show, like her old program's format?

Inspirational

We feel that now is the time for her to project her caring side in a major way, and do an inspirational talk *cum* public service show that helps viewers aside from entertaining them. Or, she could do an anthology show with genuinely inspiring themes.

Other established stars should also take advantage of the Christmas break to plan their own new moves, so their careers can remain on the up-and-up in 2006.

SORIANO. Has toned down her performances.

High octane music, politics in 'Mezmerize'

By Noelani Torre

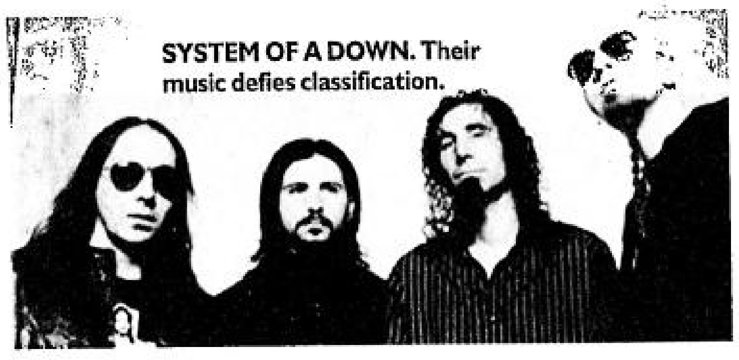
THE NÜ-METAL GENRE HAS become increasingly insignificant in the past few years. In fact, what's happening now is practically an echo of the last decade's musical changing of the guards, when hard metal gave way to grunge.

However, the new bands sounding nü-metal's death knell sprang from its own ranks. A prime example would be the LA-based quartet System of a Down.

Initially included under the nü-metal umbrella, SOAD has gone off on more than a dozen tangents in the space of seven years and five albums, so that they now defy classification.

Rage

The metal is still there, but there's also funk, R&B, pop, punk, jazz, Armenian folk. Combine all that with a faster-than-the-speed-of-light lyric delivery, insanely catchy choruses, frantic riffs, and political rage interspersed with irreverence, and you get a band that sounds like nothing you've ever heard before.



SYSTEM OF A DOWN. Their music defies classification.

Vocalist/keyboardist Serj Tankian, vocalist/guitarist Daron Malakian, bassist Shavo Odadjian, and drummer John Dolmayan made their eponymously-titled debut in 1998.

"System of a Down" hit gold, and the Armenian-American foursome haven't looked back since 2001's multi-platinum "Toxicity" debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard charts, and 2002's "Steal This Album!" was likewise successful.

This year saw the release of one album launched in two parts: "Mezmerize" and "Hypnotize"—both of which serve to cement SOAD's status as one of hard rock's top bands, and one of the most innovative groups in any genre.

"Mezmerize," the first release, is 36 minutes' worth of high octane SOAD—not that the band isn't practically always manic.

The album opener is the quiet and pensive intro to "Soldier Side," but before you even have the chance to take a breath, "B.Y.O.B." hits you with a metallic barrage that has a surprisingly R&B flavored chorus.

Lyrics

"B.Y.O.B." (Bring Your Own Bomb) is one of the 13-track CD's most political songs, with lyrics like "Why don't presidents fight the war?/ Why do they always send the poor?" They're not always that unsubtle, though. The same song's aforementioned chorus goes: "Everybody's going to the party/ have a real good time/ Dancing in the desert, blowing up the sunshine."

When they're not expressing political views, they're either commenting on other social ills (like fake, plastic Hollywood, society's obsession with fame) or just playing around. "This Cocaine Makes Me Feel Like I'm On This Song," for example, has far-out lines like "Gonorrhea gorgonzola" and "There's something wrong with me/ I hope your stepson doesn't eat the fish."

Eccentric

If they sound a bit on the eccentric side, it's because they are unusual—and, what's more, they stand out in a field that already encourages eccentricity. How many metal-*ish* bands do you know that sing "La la la la la" operatically after a storm of growling, and then proceed to do a lilting reggae-tinged chorus?

There's no one out there quite like System of a Down, who always manage to sound years ahead of their time. If this is what nü-metal will become in the future, change is a very good thing indeed.

Lucy Torres is TV's newest dance diva

By Jocelyn Valle

TORRES. "I have a lot to learn."

THOUGH SHE BElongs to a well-to-do family from the South, Lucy Torres didn't grow up getting everything she wanted.

Lucy, with husband Richard Gomez, is trying to instill the same discipline on daughter Julianna. When they shop at Toy Kingdom, for instance, they allow the tyke to get only one item of her choice.

Present

Curiously, the couple doesn't practice the traditional gift-swapping. "There was a time when we didn't even get each other anything," she shares. "But, when we see something that the other likes, we get it as a present."

Lucy and Richard would rather spread the holiday cheer to their godchildren, relatives, friends and co-workers. "Our shopping list is for hundreds of people," she offers. "But, we're not into giving generic gifts—*binabagay ko talaga sa tao.* I enjoy wrapping gifts."

This year, though, Lucy admits that she's been a bit late with her Yuletide chores because she's busy with her Sunday show, "Shall We Dance: The Celebrity Dance Challenge," on Channel 5.

Thankfully, her hard work has paid off. "I've been told that our show is *the* top-rating show of the network," she beams.

"Of course, there's always room for improvement. We work doubly hard to deliver a good show," she points out. We saw this during a recent visit to the set. Lucy's opening number took several takes to finish, though the host and her back-up dancers hardly made mistakes.

Admiration

Lucy doesn't mind being compared to Dayanara Torres and Charlene Gonzales, who've had popular dance programs in the past. "It's part of the job," says TV's newest dance diva. She has only respect and admiration for Yari and Charlene. "I have a lot to learn, especially when it comes to ballroom dancing. But, I'm having fun!"

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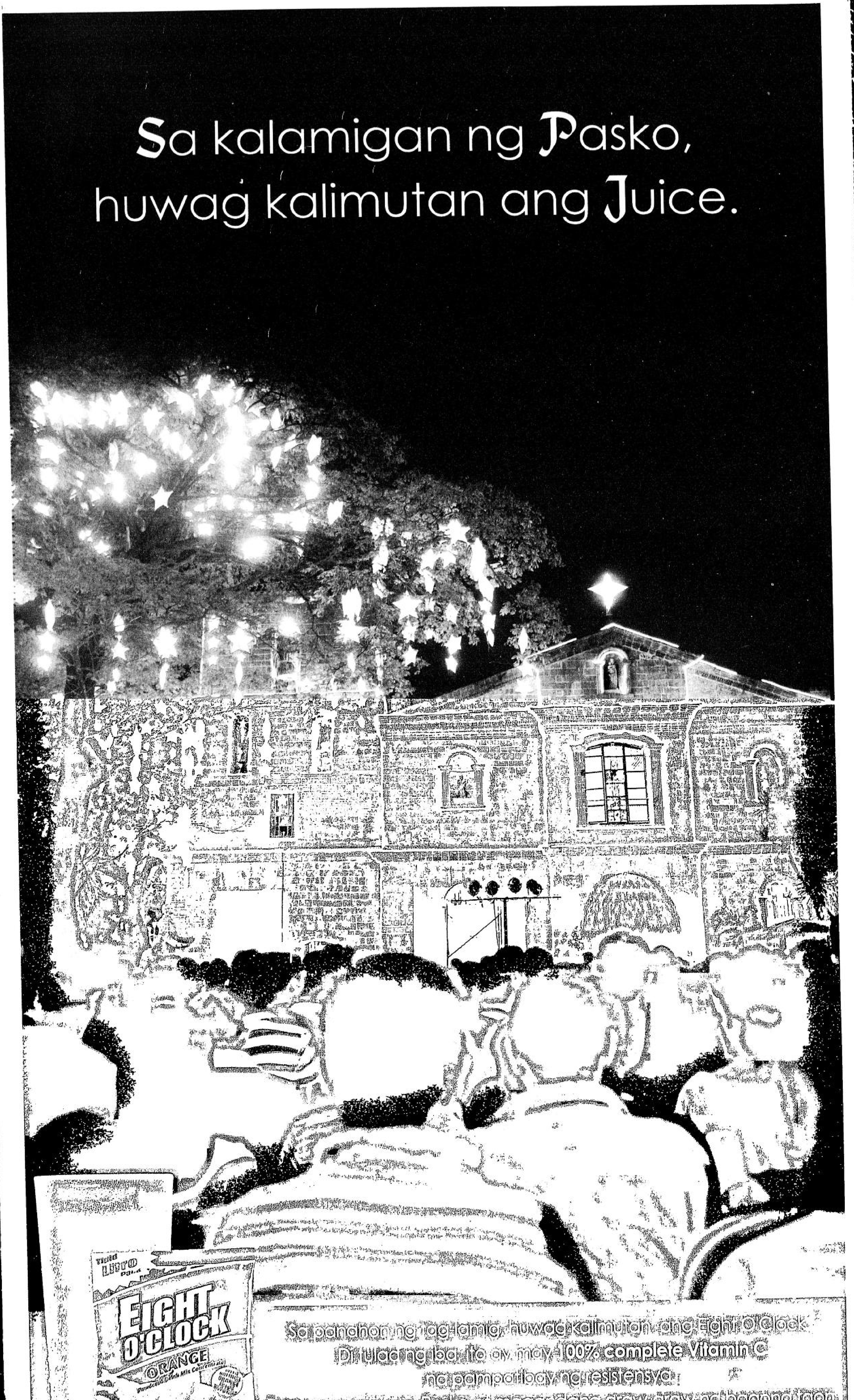
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Editor **Raul O. Marcelo**
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Thrift banks' real estate loan exposure up 13.6%

Reflective of steady rise in construction activity

By Michelle V. Remo

LOANS EXTENDED BY THRIFT banks to the real estate sector climbed 13.6 percent in the third quarter of 2005 from year-ago level, which reflected an increasing activity in the sector.

Data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed that the total exposure of thrift banks to the real estate sector hit P56.5 billion in the three months to September, or 4.8 percent higher than the level in the previous quarter. This was the 10th consecutive quarter that the thrift banking sector posted an increase in lending to the real estate sector.

"This is important because this means there is really a significant amount of activity going on in the real estate sector," said BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

The BSP data showed that loans extended to finance acquisition of residential property by individual homeowners and borrowers accounted for 72.8 percent of the total, or P41.1 billion.

While the thrift banks' loan exposure increased, the ratio of past due real-estate loans to total loans to the sector improved to 12.3 percent in the quarter from 12.8 percent in the previous quarter and 14 percent in the third quarter of 2004.

"This favorable development took place as the expansion in RELs (real estate loans) outpaced the 1.3-percent increase in past due RELs," the BSP said in a statement.

In the meantime, the thrift banking industry's total non-performing loans (NPL) ratio to total loans, including those outside the real estate sector, increased to 9.18 percent in October from 9.09 percent in September.

The October 2005 NPL ratio was, however, better than the 10.97 percent registered in October 2004.

"Loan restructuring activities have likewise been reined in," the BSP said. The central bank noted that the ratio of restructured loans to the thrift banks' total loan portfolio moved only

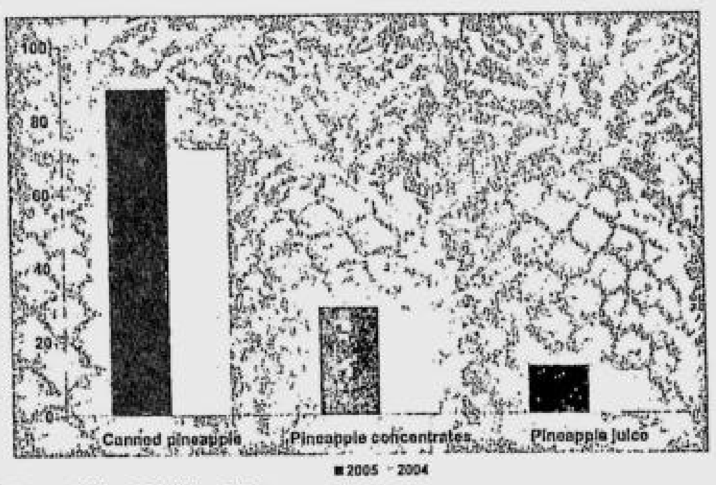
THRIFT/ B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Philippine pineapple exports

(January-October 2004 and 2005, in million US dollars)



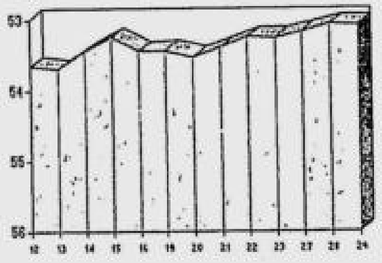
Source: National Statistics Office

PINEAPPLE products accounted for 8 percent of agro-based exports in the first 10 months of the year, which made up 5 percent of the country's $33-billion total exports. Total pineapple exports went up in January-October 2005 compared to the same period in 2004. Canned pineapple exports grew 22.9 percent this year to $88.7 million; pineapple concentrates up 5.5 percent to $29.3 million, and pineapple juice up 15.3 percent to $12.9 million.

Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 53.09 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 29, 2005

¥ 117.48 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2005

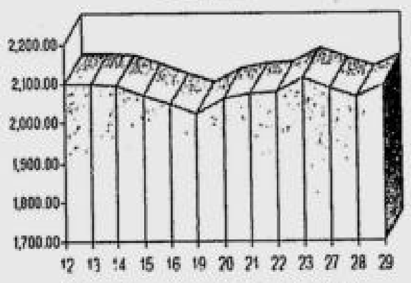
GOLD: $514.00-514.50

per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 30, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

DECEMBER



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks advance 1.4%

STOCKS ENDED THE YEAR ON AN UPBEAT note, as investors took advantage of the market's recent losses to hunt for bargains, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index rose 28.72 points Thursday, or 1.4 percent, to 2,096.04. The index shed 2.1 percent over the past two trading days, including Wednesday's one percent loss.

The main index was up 15 percent from its 2004 closing level of 1,822.83. There was no trading last Friday, a public holiday. Trading resumes on Monday.

Blue chips dominated trading, led by Bank of the Philippine Islands, which rose 1.9 percent to P54.50, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., up 3.1 percent at P1,835, and Globe Telecom, up 2.1 percent to P735.

The peso stayed firm, boosted by remittances from overseas Filipino workers and market optimism on the government's improving finances, traders said. The dollar closed at P53.090 on the Philippine Dealing System, marginally higher than Wednesday's close of P53.080. *AP*

Palay output expected to post modest growth in Q4

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY'S PALAY PRODUCTION is expected to post a modest growth in the fourth quarter after a steady decline in the first nine months of the year.

The Department of Agriculture said the growth might not be enough to recover the decline in the previous three quarters but would bring total production for the year to at least 14.2 million metric tons. This production level is almost the same as last year's but off the target for the year of 15.1 million metric tons.

"There has been a strong recovery, but it (the total) still fell short of the target. There are still data to be brought in from regional offices that we hope could still change the numbers," the DA official said.

A stronger palay production was expected in the last quarter given the increase in the areas planted to hybrid rice to 240,000 hectares from 156,000 hectares in the last cropping season. This is expected to bring in additional palay yield of at least one million metric tons during the main harvest season.

The hybrid rice seed technology could increase yields from 4 metric tons to 9 metric tons per hectare.

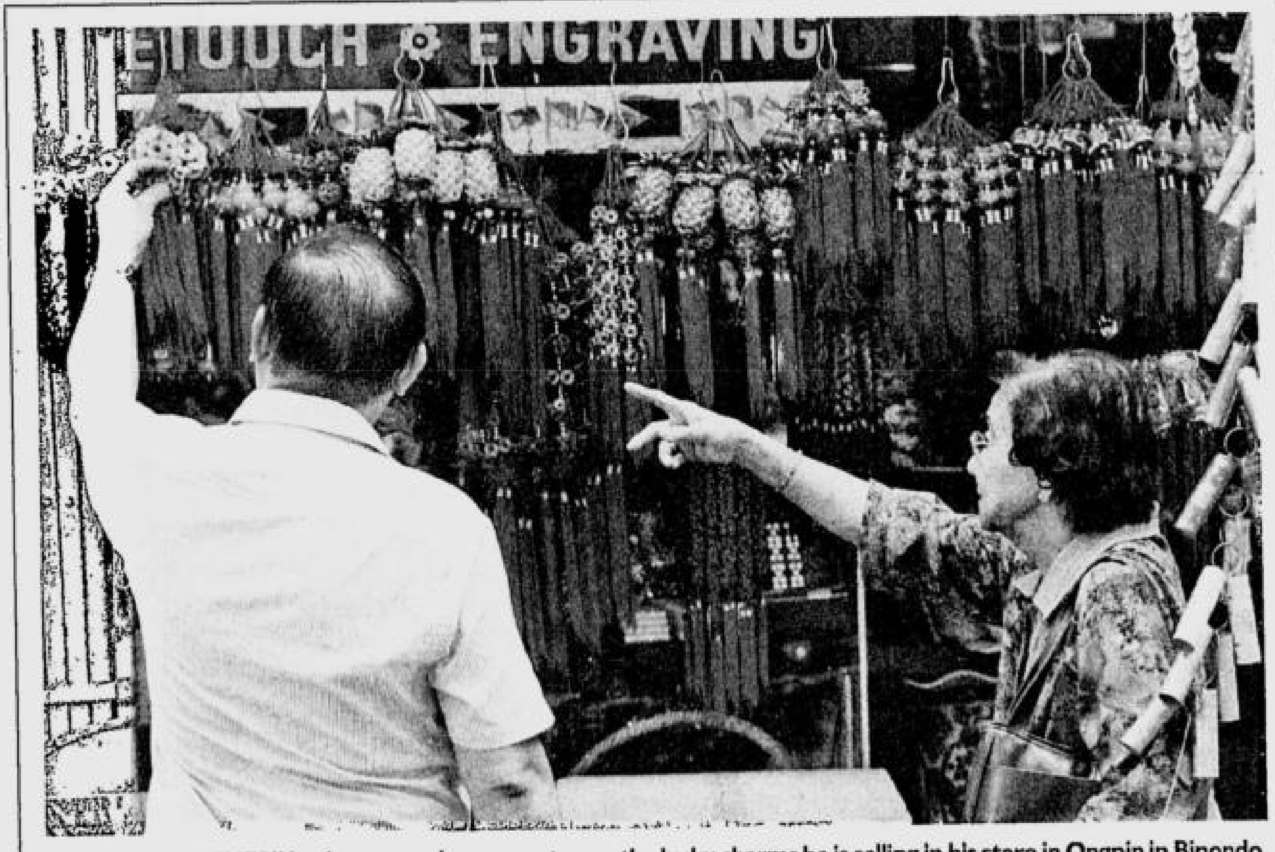
In a related development, seed companies confirmed that sales were relatively higher this year as more farmers use the hybrid rice technology.

Bayer Crop Science Philippines estimated that its sales grew by least 20 percent this year.

"We felt that sales grew as more farmers shifted to hybrid rice seeds. The changing weather conditions encouraged them to invest in good seeds," Bayer's Philippine BioScience manager Carlos Miguel Saplala said in an interview.

Another hybrid rice seed producer, SL Agritech Inc., said its sales were expected to growth by 19 percent this year.

To encourage farmers to shift to hybrid rice seeds, the DA will continue providing a P1,300 per hectare seed subsidy, fertilizer discounts and technical assistance through technodemo farms.



A FILIPINO-CHINESE businessman shows a customer the lucky charms he is selling in his store in Ongpin in Binondo, Manila. These lucky charms are sought by many Filipinos as they prepare for the coming new year. REM ZAMORA

10 groups seen joining Mimosa estate bidding

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—THE privatization of the 210-hectare Mimosa Leisure Estate here is entering its second stage with 10 local and foreign bidders expected to submit their eligibility requirements on Jan. 3.

Although not officially blacklisted, the I.A. Campbell & Associates and its Filipino insurer, the Prudential Guarantee and Assurance Inc., were not among the new proponents, Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Ng said last Thursday.

The state-owned base conversion body sued Prudential Guarantee in October this year for allegedly submitting "spurious and/or fictitious" documents in a bid in 2004 to win the privatization project entailing the development and operation of the recreation estate.

In the suit, the CDC is seeing the forfeiture in its favor of Campbell's P69-million bidder's bond issued by Prudential Guarantee and over P20 million more in interests and legal fees.

"We have not expressly made that decision (to blacklist Campbell and its insurer) but they're not part of the bidding," Ng told the INQUIRER.

By Feb. 3 and after due diligence, the list of CDC board-approved list of eligible final bidders would be made public and their names known, Ng said.

The pre-bid conference is scheduled on March 6 while the deadline for bid submission is on March 27. The minimum bid required is P1.6 billion.

"We are strictly following the bidding process and it's proceeding smoothly," Ng said, adding that CDC expects to conclude the program by June 2006.

The second try at privatizing the Mimosa comes seven years after former President Joseph Estrada ordered the seizure of the estate in 1998 when the company of former Tourism Secretary Jose Antonio Gonzales accumulated P500 million in unpaid rentals.

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

DBP to extend ₱10-B tier-2 offering

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GOVERNMENT-OWNED DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines (DBP) is extending the public offer for its P10 billion unsecured "tier 2" subordinated notes until mid-January to meet growing investor appetite, industry sources said.

DBP earlier set Dec. 22 as its launch date for the 10-year subordinated notes.

Under the scheme, DBP offered lower tier 2 subordinated notes of up to P10 billion to boost its capital, marking the first time a government financial institution (GFI) raised capital by inviting quasi-investors.

Tier 2 capital allows firms to raise fresh capital from investors without diluting the ownership of existing shareholders.

During a recent investors' briefing held at the bank's head office in Makati City, bank president Reynaldo G. David said, "This issue allows DBP to achieve the two-fold objective of strengthening its capital base while providing investors with an attractive alternative to deposit products and other debt securities."

"Investors in DBP's tier 2 notes, meanwhile, get to contribute to nation-building as their investment further strengthens the ability of the country's primary development financing institution to provide resources necessary for sustainable growth and development," David had said.

He added that the capital notes offering will allow the bank to achieve competitive funding necessary for the expansion of its services, as well as to fast-track the implementation of its various strategic development priorities.

The offering is seen jacking up DBP's capital adequacy ratio—its level of stockholders' equity as a percentage of assets exposed to risk—to about 36 to 38 percent from 21 percent.

The tier 2 subordinated notes have a maturity of 10 years and are subject to an optional redemption or buy back by DBP after five years. Indicative interest rates range from 9.38 to 9.88 percent a year.

MRT-7 proponent seeks higher return on investment

By Clarissa S. Batino

UNIVERSAL LRT CORP., THE consortium taking on the P1.23-billion Metro Rail Transit 7 line from San Jose, Bulacan to North Edsa, is asking the government for a higher rate of return ceiling than the 11.9 percent that the government economic team had approved.

"A maximum rate of return of 11.9 percent to the MRT-7 investors is very restrictive considering the risks that the investors are required to assume," said Eli Levin, chief executive officer of Universal LRT, in his Dec. 19 letter to the Department of Transportation and Communications.

The MRT-7 project comes with a real estate component where the consortium is committing to construct 2,500 residential units and 300 office units on a 174-hectare property in Bulacan. The consortium will also construct a 22-km road and a 20-ha bus and train depot also in Bulacan.

The SM Group now owns 60 percent of MRT-7's real estate venture and 25 percent of the railway project. Local and foreign companies like Siemens, Alstom, China Railway 18, EEI Corp. of the Yuchengcos and Merlin Capital of the Tong family are lumped as Universal LRT. Former Equitable PCI Bank chair George Go and exporter Sergio Ortiz-Luis are directors of the company.

Levin pointed out that, on a recent long-term bond sale, the government sold bonds with a fixed return of 10.75 percent.

These government bonds have full sovereign guarantee whereas with MRT-7, Levin claimed, investors assumed "full commercial and ridership risks" apart from the operation and maintenance risks.

The inter-agency Investment Coordination Committee told the DOTC in its Dec. 15 memo that all revenue above the 11.9 percent return ceiling would accrue to the government.

Levin, in his letter to the DOTC, asked that any excess revenue be shared equally by the government and the consortium.

"We have suggested that with increased efficiency, good performance and a higher level of ridership within the capacity provided under our agreement, our investors be given the chance to exceed the projected rate of return," said the head of Universal LRT.

Levin told the DOTC that the consortium agreed with the posting of a performance bond for the real estate portion of the project.

The amount of the bond or the kind of security, however, has yet to be determined given that there was no clear basis as to what formula would apply for posting a bond for a large real estate project, said the CEO of Universal LRT.

DOTC assistant secretary Robert Castañares said the real estate component of the MRT 7 project would sufficiently allow the government to recover the subsidy that it would provide.

"In the end, it would be deficit neutral for the government," said the transport deputy.

Castañares said that in the first 10 years of operation, the government will support the MRT-7 project with a yearly subsidy of $108 million.

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
Mandaluyong City

SEC MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 8
Series of 2005

SUBJECT : ADOPTION OF PHILIPPINE ACCOUNTING STANDARDS (PAS)

The Commission, in its meeting of December 22, 2005, approved the adoption in its rules and regulations of the PAS 101 – Financial Reporting Standards for Non-Publicly Accountable Entities (NPAEs) as approved by the Accounting Standards Council to provide temporary relief to qualified small and medium enterprises in the application of the new accounting standards.

The standard is effective for financial reporting periods beginning January 1, 2005.

Issued this 27th day of December 2005 at EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City.

(Sgd.) **FE B. BARIN**
Chairperson

Philippine Accounting Standard 101
Financial Reporting Standards for Non-publicly Accountable Entities

Introduction

1. The Accounting Standards Council (ASC), in line with the accounting profession's objective to converge Philippine accounting standards with international accounting standards, issued a number of new accounting standards, referred to as Philippine Financial Reporting Standards (PFRSs) that became effective in 2005. The adoption of the new accounting standards was approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the Board of Accountancy (BOA) and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC); and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). The PFRSs were intended at that time to be applicable to all reporting entities that prepared financial statements in conformity with generally accounting principles in the Philippines.
2. Considering the significant number of small and medium-sized entities (SMEs) in the Philippines, the ASC has considered providing temporary relief to SMEs in the application of the new standards.
3. The ASC plan was given impetus, by the decision of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) in 2005 to undertake a project to develop accounting standards suitable for entities that do not (1) have public accountability and (2) publish general purpose financial statements for external users (e.g., owners who are not involved in managing the business, existing and potential creditors, and credit rating agencies). The IASB refers to this group of entities as ***Non-Publicly Accountable Entities, or NPAEs***. The IASB has decided to use the term "non-publicly accountable entities, ' rather than "small and medium-sized entities" because the latter term has different meanings around the world.
4. Under the IASB project, an entity has public accountability if:
    - it has filed, or it is in the process of filing, its financial statements with a securities commission or other regulatory organization for the purpose of issuing any class of instruments in a public market;
    - it holds assets in a fiduciary capacity for a broad group of outsiders, such as a bank, insurance company, securities broker/dealer, pension fund, mutual fund or investment banking entity;
    - it is a public utility or similar entity that provides an essential public service; or
    - it is economically significant in its home country on the basis of criteria such as total assets, total income, number of employees, degree of market dominance, and nature and extent of external borrowings.
5. The IASB expects to issue an exposure draft on accounting by NPAEs in March 2006 and the final standard in 2007.

Objective

6. The objective of this Standard is to provide temporary relief in the application of the new PFRSs that became effective in 2005 to entities that will be covered by this Standard. The Standard identifies which entities are covered, provides an option to these entities in the application of the new PFRSs, specifies the financial reporting standards applicable to these entities and provides for certain disclosures.

Qualifying Entities

7 This Standard shall be applied in the general purpose financial statements prepared and presented by an entity with no public accountability. An entity has public accountability.
   a. if it is required to file financial statements under SEC Rule 68.1, *Special Rule on Financial Statements of Reporting Companies under Section 17.2 of the Securities Regulation Code*. Under the SEC rules, these would include:
      (1) an issuer which has sold a class of their securities pursuant to a registration under Section 12 of the Code;
      (2) an issuer with a class of securities listed for trading on an Exchange; and
      (3) an issuer with assets of at least P50 million and having 200 or more holders each holding at least 100 shares of a class of its equity securities as of the first day of the issuer's fiscal year;
   b. if it is in the process of filing its financial statements for the purpose of issuing any class of instruments in a public market;
   c. if it holds assets in a fiduciary capacity for a broad group of outsiders, such as a bank (all types of banks), an investment house, a finance company, an insurance company, a securities broker/dealer, a mutual fund and a pre-need company;
   d. if it is a public utility or similar entity that provides an essential public service; or
   e. If it is economically significant, as described in paragraph 8; or
   f. if it is considered by its primary regulator to have public accountability.

8. For purposes of paragraph 7(e), an entity is considered economically significant if it exceeds either of the following: total assets of P250 million or total liabilities of P150 million. For this purpose, the total assets and total liabilities are based on the entity's 2004 financial statements.
9. The criteria for an economically significant entity are arbitrary and will be reviewed when the IASB has issued its final standard on NPAEs or earlier if necessary.
10. An entity which is a subsidiary must assess whether it would qualify under this Standard in its own financial statements.

Option Available to Qualifying Entities

11. A qualifying entity under this Standard is allowed not to apply in its general purpose financial statements the new PFRSs that became effective in 2005.
12. A qualifying entity, however, may still choose to apply any or all of the new PFRSs.
13. An entity that has public accountability, as provided in paragraph 7, is required to apply the new PFRSs in its financial statements for 2005, unless its primary regulator issues a pronouncement exempting the entity from applying a new standard or certain provisions of a new standard.

Financial Reporting Standards Applicable to Qualifying Entities

14. A qualifying entity under this Standard that chooses to avail of the option not to apply the new PFRSs shall apply the applicable financial reporting standards effective as of December 2004 in preparing its general purpose financial statements. The Appendix lists these standards.

Disclosure

15 A qualifying entity shall disclose the basis of presentation of its financial statements.

Effective Date

16. A qualifying entity shall apply this Standard for annual periods beginning on or after January 1, 2005 The Standard shall be effective for 2005 to 2007, unless revoked earlier.

Appendix

Financial Reporting Standards Effective as of December 2004
Applicable to Qualifying Entities under PAS 101

	Framework for the Preparation and Presentation of Financial Statements
SFAS 1 (rev)	Presentation of Financial Statements
SFAS 4 (rev)	Inventories
SFAS 8	Accounting for the Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates
SFAS 8A	Deferral of Foreign Exchange Differences (an amendment of SFAS 8)
SFAS 10	Summary of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles on Investments
SFAS 13 (rev)	Net Profit or Loss for the Period, Fundamental Errors and Changes in Accounting Policies
SFAS 18	Summary of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles on Stockholders' Equity
SFAS 22 (rev)	Cash Flow Statements
SFAS 24	Retirement Benefit Costs
SFAS 25	Borrowing Costs
SFAS 26	Construction Contracts
SFAS 28	Revenue
SFAS 10/IAS 10	Events After the Balance Sheet Date
SFAS 12/IAS 12	Income Taxes
SFAS 16/IAS 16	Property, Plant and Equipment
SFAS 17/IAS 17	Leases
SFAS 20/IAS 20	Accounting for Government Grants and Disclosure of Government Assistance
SFAS 22/IAS 22	Business Combinations
SFAS 24/IAS 24	Related Party Disclosures
SFAS 26/IAS 26	Accounting and Reporting by Retirement Benefit Plans
SFAS 27/IAS 27	Consolidated Financial Statements and Accounting for Investments in Subsidiaries
SFAS 28/IAS 28	Accounting for Investments in Associates
SFAS 31/IAS 31	Financial Reporting of Interests in Joint Ventures
SFAS 35/IAS 35	Discontinuing Operations
SFAS 36/IAS 36	Impairment of Assets
SFAS 37/IAS 37	Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets
SFAS 38/IAS 38	Intangible Assets

Note The following standards, which were effective as of December 31, 2004, were excluded from the above list since these applying to entities with public accountability, such as listed entities, banks or insurance companies.

SFAS 19	Summary of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for the Banking Industry
SFAS 27	Accounting and Reporting for the Nonlife Insurance Industry
SFAS 29	Earnings Per Share
SFAS 30	Interim Financial Reporting
SFAS 31	Segment Reporting

Approval of PAS 101 by the ASC

The Accounting Standards Council (ASC) has approved in October 2005 the issuance of Philippine Accounting Standard (PAS) 101, *Financial Reporting Standards for Non-publicly Accountable Entities.*

ASC Members

Carlos R. Alindada, Chairman
Romeo C. Alba
Roberto G. Manabat
Eugene T. Mateo
Alfredo B. Parungao
Nestor A. Espenilla, Jr. / Ma. Dolores B. Yuvienco
Maximo C. Roque, Jr.
Violeta V. Vicente

(PDI – December 31, 2005)

Start with the wrong put

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

ACTUALLY, UNknown to many of us, somebody campaigned hard for this hot contentious issue that the media labelled as "no-el." You know—"no election."

As you know, the issue suddenly materialized in media during the holidays. Apparently, it was the hot issue emerging from the Constitutional Commission.

That's the group of renowned personalities who were HANDPICKED (as against "elected") by this cute administration of Gloriaetta.

Supposedly, the commission should help bring about meaningful changes in our country, mainly by coming up with amendments to the Constitution. Supposedly!

In reality, we all know that the commission came about because somebody in the Palace wanted to please some political faction and thus save her sorry a … well, whatever.

Anyway, the latest version of the charter-overhauling work of the commission has this so-called "transitory provision."

Why does the term sound familiar? Hmmm, let me see now. Oh, yes, it dates back to the start of Marcos dictatorship.

Marcos also bought himself a new Constitution. That Marcos "constitution" had a transitory provision. This only had the minor effect of perpetuating him in power.

Now the best and brightest among us are entertaining the same, er, "transitory provision," as they come up with a draft for the amendments to our ancient, antiquated, obsolete Constitution that is barely 17 years old.

But as I said, somebody actually campaigned for the controversial provision, including the cancellation of the elections in 2007.

My insider's info is, well, that the notorious provision only won the approval of the commission by a narrow margin.

What's more, the commission had to vote on it not just once, but a couple of times.

In the first show of hands, you see, the "no-el" proposal won by so narrow a margin that they decided to do it all over again.

That gave a leading member of the commission, who happens to be a lady lawyer, the opening to campaign for more votes in favor of the "no-el."

And do you know what her campaign line was? Well, according our lady lawyer, the "no-el" was the, er, "incentive" to Congress to support the amendments.

You may wonder why members of Congress will so love the "no-el" that they will go along with the constitutional amendments blindly.

To start with, the 2007 elections will involve our beloved lawmakers. Thus, the "no-el" transition should keep them in office for a few more years, way after their terms expire. Wow!

I like the way a member of the commission—Noel Cariño, vice chair of the Fil-Estate group—called the "no-el" proposal.

And that is, "political bribery." You know, what we know down here as "put."

Ironically, the constitutional commission came about because we have been longing for meaningful reforms in this country.

Not the least of which is a solution to our serious problem of too much graft and corruption. We have to rid this country of that "put" mentality. We need to put our public officials on a strict diet from bribes and kickbacks.

Here is the body that is supposed to work on those meaningful reforms, and it does not even hesitate to use bribery.

And that reliance of "put," no matter how you look at it, is wrong. Methinks we are starting on the wrong foot again.

***

THAT famous "168 building" in Binondo, that site of the ultimate "tiangge" of dirt cheap clothes, toys and everything from China, may have come up with the systematic form of bribery.

At least, that is the word going around Binondo.

Sure, loose talk also insinuates that the big mall owners, particularly the SM group of Henry Sy and Robinson's of John Gokongwei Jr., recently released a lot of lobby money (plus, er, "media campaign funds") to fight the "168 building" pestilence.

Apparently, specifically during the holidays, mall sales were already hurting from the "tiangge" phenomenon.

Still, word in Binondo has it that the "168 building" operation had put the art of bribery right down to a centralized system.

They say that a certain "BT," who is a Chinese Filipino businessman, actually collects a certain amount every month from the stall operators, mostly coming from China.

From out of the monthly collection, our hero BT then supposedly takes care of the Bureau of Immigration, the Bureau of Customs, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Philippine National Police, the Manila City Hall, and a certain "connection" in the Palace.

That kind of centralized corruption!

Thrift …

From page B1

slightly higher to 2.49 percent in October from 2.48 percent the previous month.

The central bank also reported that the thrift banking industry's real and other properties owned or acquired (Ropoa) declined by 1.7 percent.

The BSP said the banks' non-performing accounts continued to be adequately covered by provisions for losses. Their NPL coverage ratio stood at 45.37 percent, while the NPA coverage ratio was at 20.61 percent. The NPL coverage ratio for October was lower than the 45.49 percent in September 2005, but significantly higher than the 37.11 percent a year ago.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Dec. 29, 2005)

Stocks	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	34	34	33	34	403,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	53.5	54.5	53	54.5	2,979,300
China Banking Corp.	610	620	610	620	570
Citystate Savings Bank	18.25	19	18.25	19	120,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.6	0.61	1,130,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	57.5	59	57.5	59	60,000
International Exch. Bank	20.25	21	20.25	21	10,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32	32.5	31.5	32	683,400
Philippine National Bank	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	22,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	13.5	13.5	12,400
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	34.5	33	34.5	202,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	16,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	25,000
First Abacus Financial	0.65	0.75	0.51	0.75	1,520,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3100	3160	3100	3160	30
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.02	1.02	117,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	150	150	150	150	10
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2130	2100	2130	1,800
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	3,400
Diversified Fin. Network	4	4	4	4	1,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.92	0.93	0.91	0.93	2,790,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	715	740	715	735	111,260
Ipeople Inc.	2.95	3	2.9	2.9	228,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	600,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.046	0.047	0.046	0.047	13,000,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.35	3.5	3.35	3.5	3,161,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1780	1835	1780	1835	64,610
Ivantage Corp.	0.58	0.6	0.58	0.6	8,800,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	24,400,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14	15	14	14.25	1,500
Manila Electric Co. B	21.75	21.75	21.75	21.75	80,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.2	3,575,000
Petron Corp.	4.45	4.5	4.45	4.5	2,102,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	10,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	380,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	131,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.75	0.78	0.73	0.78	5,580,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	20,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.4	2,576,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	128,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	23.75	23.25	23.75	120,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41.5	41.5	40.5	40.5	461,300
Pancake House Inc.	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	393,000
RFM Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.71	0.71	280,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64.5	65	64.5	65	170,900
San Miguel Corp. B	87.5	89	87.5	88.5	75,200
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	19.75	18.75	19.5	141,900
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.29	0.26	0.29	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	312.5	315	310	315	93,110
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	300,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	447,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	1,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.06	2.08	2.06	2.08	90,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	300,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	640,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.44	1.1	1.44	55,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	141,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	500,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	4,884,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.97	100,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	4,100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.165	0.175	0.165	0.175	1,060,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.32	920,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3	3.15	2.95	3.15	2,363,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	3,500,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.89	0.8	0.89	90,000
F&J Prince Hldgs. B	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48	49	48	49	994,000
House of Investments Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	10,000
Ionics Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	202,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	6,700
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.45	3.25	3.45	2,724,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	5,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.018	0.017	0.018	2,000,000
Medco Holdings	0.3	0.42	0.3	0.42	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.2	1.2	17,908,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	10,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	6,820,000
Paxys Inc.	6	6.4	6	6.4	5,664,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.32	1.28	1.32	746,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	239	240	116,180
South China Resources Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	100,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.3	70,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.38	150,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1	1.02	0.99	1.02	10,600,000
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	50,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.42	1.48	1.4	1.48	300,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	4,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	13	13	12.75	12.75	69,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series N	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.7	9.8	9.5	9.7	865,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.7	9.9	9.7	9.9	4,957,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.1	1,500,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.88	1.88	253,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.2	0.2	1,140,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	720,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	1,347,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.3	2.32	2.3	2.32	80,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	190,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	1,090,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	83,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	200,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.38	1.42	150,000
San Miguel Prop. Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	300
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8	8	7.9	7.9	10,038,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	60,000
Apex Mining Co., Inc. B	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	180,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.8	203,000
Benguet Corp. A	6.9	7	6.9	7	30,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	66,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	750,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.26	0.245	0.25	5,610,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.018	200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	30,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	61,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.36	1.36	1.3	1.3	3,921,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.74	1.76	1.72	1.76	7,889,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28.5	29	28	29	1,488,200
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	34,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	25,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.125	0.125	1,060,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	20,000

Smart's perfect 3G rating

SMART COMMUNICATIONS Inc. was given the most number of third generation (3G) mobile frequencies by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), placing the company in the position to offer best quality 3G service.

Among the companies that applied for a 3G license, Smart ranked highest, garnering a perfect score of 30 based on the NTC's 30-point grading system designed to gauge the capability of operators to provide 3G services.

As a result, Smart has been assigned the largest radio frequency allocation–15 MHz compared to 10 MHz for the other operators.

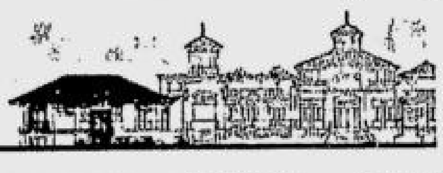
The grading system used, as detailed in section 3.6 of NTC's 3G ruling, measures the capability of prospective operators to: massively roll-out 3G network in at least 80 percent of the country's towns and cities in the next five years; interconnect with other 3G and mobile operators; and share network and facilities with other providers in areas where demand limits service provision to just one operator.

CURRENCIES

December 29, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.844737	1.000000	53.0670
Japan	Yen	0.007168	0.008485	0.4503
United Kingdom	Pound	1.449907	1.716400	91.0842
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108966	0.128994	6.8453
Switzerland	Franc	0.641508	0.759417	40.3000
Canada	Dollar	0.725034	0.858295	45.5471
Singapore	Dollar	0.507015	0.600204	31.8510
Australia	Dollar	0.617228	0.730674	38.7747
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.241277	2.653224	140.7986
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.225239	0.266638	14.1497
Brunei	Dollar	0.505498	0.598408	31.7557
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020628	0.024420	1.2959
UAE	Dirham	0.229998	0.272272	14.4487
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.183800	62.8207
Argentina	Peso	0.277646	0.328677	17.4419
Brazil	Real	0.359233	0.425260	22.5673
Denmark	Kroner	0.134049	0.158687	8.4210
India	Rupee	0.018743	0.022188	1.1775
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223517	0.264599	14.0415
Mexico	New Peso	0.078391	0.092799	4.9246
New Zealand	Dollar	0.576102	0.681989	36.1911
South Africa	Rand	0.132879	0.157302	8.3475
Korea	Won	0.000834	0.000987	0.0524
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025552	0.030248	1.6052

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

PROPERTY



Vacationers' haven to rise in Calatagan, Batangas

By Charles E. Buban

AN UNSPOILED ENVIRONMENT. A 2-kilometer beachfront property that is regarded one of Calatagan's (in Batangas) finest. A secluded enclave just a few hours drive from Metro Manila. These are more than enough reasons for Landco Pacific Corp. to develop Playa Calatagan as its next premier development by the sea.

The plan for Playa Calatagan comes on the heels of the company's success with its two flagship seaside developments—Peninsula de Punta Fuego and Terrazas de Punta Fuego—both located in Nasugbu, Batangas.

"This is Landco's most ambitious project to date and is the first of its kind in this part of Luzon," said Francis Ceballos, Landco executive vice president and chief operating officer. "This residential village development promises to be a secure and exclusive haven that offers picturesque parks, hilltop and beach clubhouses as well as extensive lists of commercial establishments."

74-hectare dev't

In conceptualizing this 74-hectare tourism estate development, Landco decided to go for a holistic approach by integrating homey ambiance, intimate and relaxed atmosphere with several elements that promise to make Playa Calatagan a leading commercial and entertainment destination.

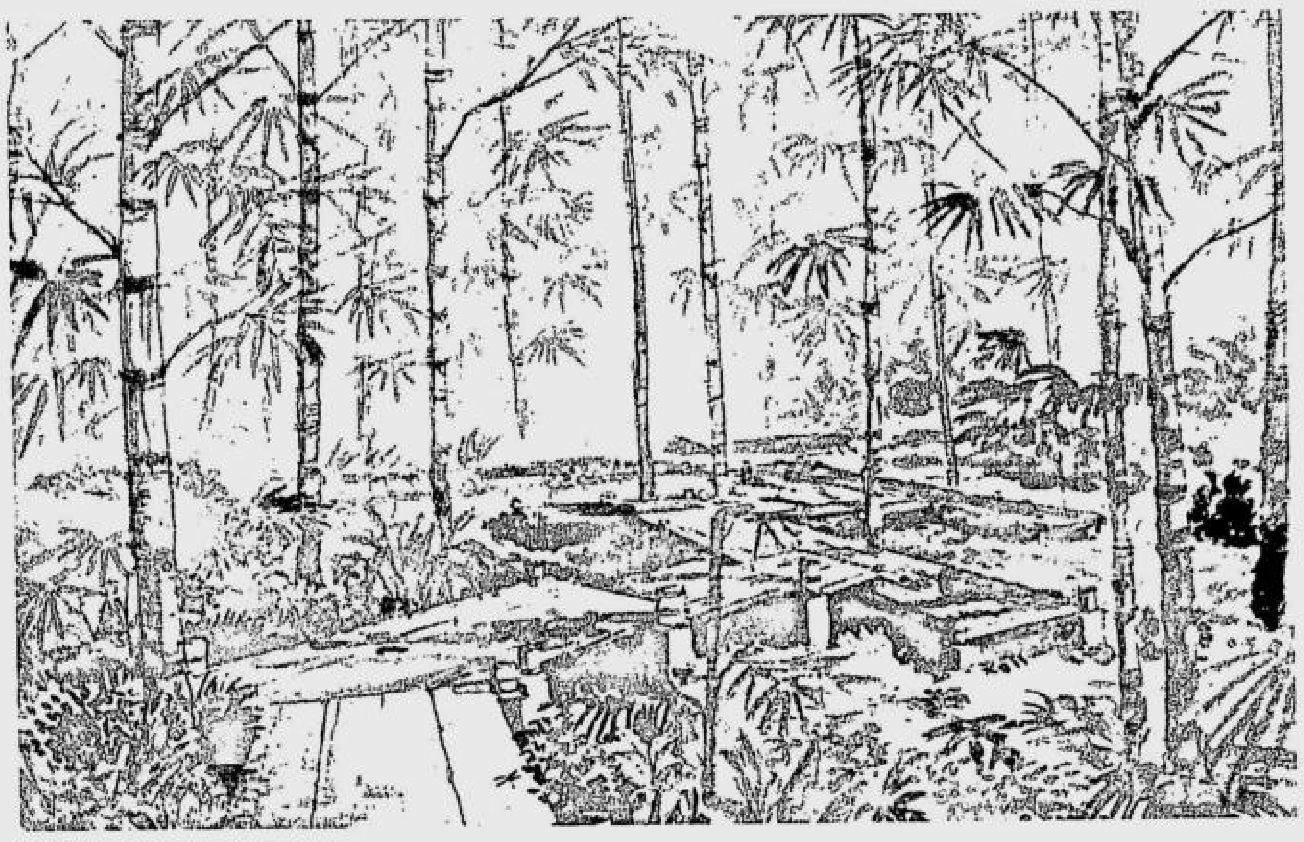
Ceballos revealed that over 500 meters of the two-kilometer beach front will be reserved for hotels, restaurants, retail shops, spas, picnic lawn and other facilities.

"Future residents and guests of Playa Calatagan will enjoy several bars and shopping kiosks that will remind them of Boracay," revealed Ceballos, adding that this seaside tourist destination will feature local cuisines, souvenir shops and other services that would make it a "Calatagan experience" like no other.

Tranquility and privacy

He clarified that while Playa Calatagan will have places where residents and guests can socialize, the developer also made it sure the residential portion of the development will be one that is private, promoting tranquility and well-being.

The provincial road will serve as the natural demarcation for the residential and beachside facilities.



ONE of Playa Calatagan's attractions, the Bamboo Park (shown in artist's perspective) is a natural bamboo reserve where one can enjoy a quiet stroll or relaxing moment.

According to Landco VP and Residential Resorts head Patrick Villano, Playa Calatagan residential components is designed to appeal to families who want to enjoy the place's unspoiled beauty.

"We decided to highlight the rustic 'feel' of the place so we chose Asian-Tropical architecture for our structures," revealed Villano.

He said residents of Playa Calatagan will be provided with their own beach club complete with cabañas, a juice bar and grill, a social hall and highly innovative river pool, designed to give one a feeling that it flows naturally from a nearby spring.

Hilltop clubhouse

Apart from the one located on the beach, Villano revealed Playa Calatagan will also feature a hilltop clubhouse with swimming pools and lounging cabanas, Central Park, Amphitheater and a Bamboo Park.

"The Bamboo Park, in particular, will provide tranquil and inspirational surroundings. To preserve natural contouring and provide minimum impact on this pristine landscape we have chosen wooden walkways elevated on posts," he said.

For those who still want more, Villano said Playa Calatagan is also 15 minutes away from the Punta de Santiago, a historic 150-year-old lighthouse that was restored recently.

Now on its 15th year, Landco is a multiproduct developer of premium residential resorts, leisure farms, first homes residential developments, shopping centers and central business districts as well as memorial parks.

Groundscrapers and subscrapers

Groundscrapers and subscrapers are the antithesis of skyscrapers. — Ken Yeang

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Amado de Jesus

IN TODAY'S RAPIDLY DEVELOPING construction industry, the competition for the tallest structure is fierce in every city. From Kuala Lumpur to New York, the quest for the tallest building never ends. However, some sectors are finding that "to be the tallest building" is not the only criterion for buildings that are impressive, maybe even what many would call "high tech." We should realize that it is not always "the higher, the better."

Depending on the function of the building, there are two very new concepts in the world of architectural design: the groundscraper and the subscraper. They do not aim to replace the skyscraper, which has its own uses, but they provide alternatives that have their own unique set of attributes and advantages.

Low and medium rise

Groundscrapers and subscrapers are low and medium-rise buildings that either stretch over a wide expanse of ground or burrow deep into the earth, respectively. Yeang, who pioneered with the use of such, characterizes them as structures with a large building footprint (which means the area of the building directly in contact with the ground). They are not very tall structures, minimizing the need for extensive and expensive structural foundations.

In most developments a lot of soil is displaced, disturbing the plant and animal life of the site. They drastically alter topography and natural drainage routes. The scraped ground is then covered with asphalt, concrete or some nonporous material losing future revegetation of the site. In addition, rainwater is prevented from being absorbed by the ground to recharge the underground reservoir.

In the case of groundscrapers and subscrapers, large impervious or nonporous surfaces are avoided and in their place "green patches" break up the surfaces. Groundscrapers consist of multiple structures unified by a set of bridges between each separate structure. They are not simply a sprawling low-rise building. They only "scrape" the ground, and not completely replace it, because of Yeang's concept of the "landscaped bridge."

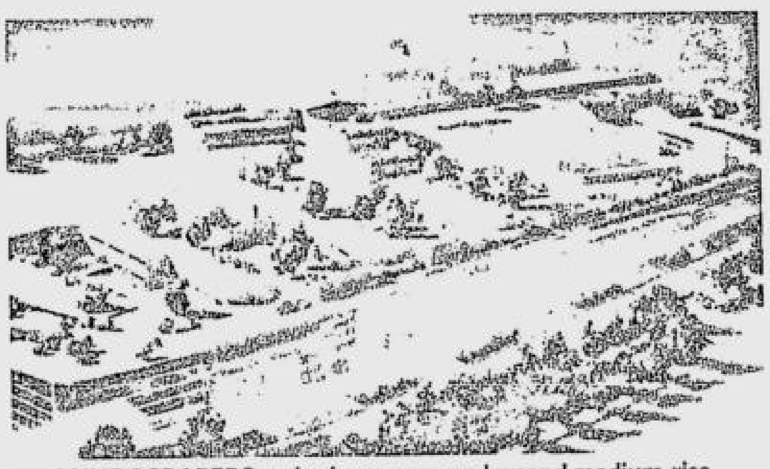
A landscaped bridge is an inorganic area that links any two structures on the groundscraper (such as roads, interconnected balconies), with the addition of vegetation. The landscaped bridge also has a close cousin, the landscaped underpass. Its purpose is similar, except that it links two points through an underground passage.

The idea is to replicate the natural habitat for both flora and fauna that would otherwise be on that site, had the buildings not been built there. The groundscraper's footprint is also "broken up" at various intervals by grass and other plants, which is why a groundscraper is truly a green building.

Benefits

The ground/subscraper maintains or creates new habitats for the flora and fauna of its surroundings. It reduces the heat-island effect with its extensive use of vegetation, which does not bounce off heat as much as concrete or metal does.

Finally the air will be cooler due to the plants' production of oxygen.



GROUNDSCRAPERS and subscrapers are low and medium-rise buildings that either stretch over a wide expanse of ground or burrow deep into the earth. One variation is the "wedge-form," a building with the thinner side starting from the ground level sloping up to the thicker side. Its surface is densely covered with vegetation to replicate the natural habitat for both flora and fauna.

T R. HAMZAH & YEANG SDN. BHD.

Practical applications

Subscrapers can play a key role in revitalizing inner city cores. In the hearts of many cities one can find old buildings that usually have historical value. To use this valuable space without tearing down the existing buildings, subscrapers are an invaluable "urban regeneration device," according to Yeang.

He calls this prototype concept the "linear subscraper," which is actually a complex below street level. Prime land within the city should be maximized, and if underground buildings were only planned well, then the city could truly revitalize its older sectors without compromising its historical value. To maintain the "greenness" of the linear subscraper, it is not heavily dependent on air conditioning, but rather on air-wells that open out on the street level to bring in ventilation and natural light.

This concept also has applications everywhere space is precious. Examples would be the multiplication of space in high-density areas, or the maximization of the view in scenic spots like hillsides.

Another practical application is what Yeang calls the "wedge-form." The building to be erected will have the shape of a wedge, with the thinner side starting from the ground level gradually sloping up to the thicker side. The wedge-formed building then leaves a small building footprint but it also has bigger floor areas on its higher levels.

With bigger ground coverage, these structures must also have more roof area. If there are more roofs, it is strongly suggested to use a green roof to insulate the buildings from heat and lower air-conditioning costs considerably.

Groundscrapers and subscrapers are green design concepts that seek to bridge the gap between the artificial built environment and the natural or ecological system of the site.

(For comments or inquiries, e-mail amadodejesus@gmail.com.)

Creba Int'l sets housing fairs

THE CREBA INTERNATIONAL Foundation Inc. (Cifi) is set to hold housing fairs next year in the United States, Canada, Japan, Asia, Australia and the Middle East.

It will also open international market opportunities for housing developers affiliated with the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Associations (Creba).

Schedule

Cifi president Purita R. Soliven and board chair Pete Tario said next year's housing marketing campaign will have the following schedule:

January—Pinoy Housing Fair in Dubai, Saudi Arabia; February—Pilipinas Housing Fair for Filipino workers and professionals at the Worldwide Center in Central, Hong Kong; March—Housing Fair, Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan.

April—Property Roadshow and cross-country caravan, East Coast, United States; May—Toronto, Canada; Singapore and Malaysia; June—Independence Day Expo in Venice, Milan and Rome, Italy and France for the whole Filipino community to celebrate Philippine Independence Day; and West Australia.

July—Annual Barrio Fiesta organized by the Philippine Center, London; and Dublin, Ireland; August—Property Expo and Home Fair in Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne, Australia; September—21st Annual Expo in Los Angeles, West Coast, United States, spearheaded by the California Examinerand the various Creba chapters in the West Coast.

November—Annual Family Day and Home Fair, Tokyo; December—Filipino Centennial Celebration and Housing Fair, Hawaii.

Past events

Earlier, Cifi held two housing fairs in Milan and Venice, Italy as well as in London in partnership with the Pag-Ibig Fund Overseas Programs.

Also held were two events in the US West Coast through the 20th Los Angeles Expo and another housing fair in Las Vegas, US.

To keep track of Cifi activities, interested developers and property marketers may call Creba at 373-2270 to 75 or e-mail Cifi at creba_inc@yahoo.com.

PRESIDIO'S PICASSO

Integrating nature amid vertical living

REDEFINING LIVING WITH ITS FIRST VERtical project located at the boundary of bustling Sucat and thriving city of Taguig, homebuilder Crown Asia presents luxurious yet sensible residential options with a neighborhood composed of 16 towers, interplaying in height and size Presidio at Brittany Bay. Standing out from Presidio's vertical community of low and mid-rise towers is the garden condo residence Picasso Tower.

The Picasso is distinguished from the many towers with distinct structure and features, while Presidio's main San Francisco theme and meticulous layout bring together the 6.8-hectare self-contained multilevel hub by the bay.

Landscaped surroundings

Inspired by San Francisco's neo-Victorian style, renowned architectural duo of Recio+Casas designed the Picasso and the rest of the towers. Details such as the famous bay windows, balconies and towers, along with stunning gable turrets, shingled roofs and intricate latticework found their way into the design.

Incorporating nature into the layout of the Picasso garden condo residence resulted in expansive landscaped surroundings, a luxurious feature that draws it apart from the usual space-deprived condominiums spread around the metro.

Throughout the grounds of Presidio, existing fauna is enhanced with carefully planned landscaping to bring about the feel of being in San Francisco. Highlights of the Picasso include walkways left open to cool air while surrounded by lush greens.

Unique structure

Possessing a unique structure, the Y-shaped configuration of the Picasso Tower is a fresh alternative from the conventional block shaped condominiums which congests as much tenants into each floor. At Picasso, a maximum of only 5 units will be allowed for each wing, providing privacy and generous breathing room for its residents. The 3-winged 7-story structure of Picasso combines esthetics with function since each unit is granted a view of quaint gardens surrounding the tower or the Sierra Madre Mountains and the glistening waters of Laguna de Bay; while allowing the breeze from the bay and natural lighting into each residence.

Prices range from P1.7 to P2.3 million.

Presidio boasts of a Village Center to house leisure and athletic amenities and facilities, and a Town Center.

Property previews may be arranged by calling Crown Towers at 718-4057, 718-3465 or 718-3006.

Swimming sensation at La Posada

TAKE A REFRESHING DIP INTO THE newest addition to La Posada, Brittany Corp.'s San Francisco-inspired enclave which features single family homes and the postcard row, picturesque Victorianne 1 and 2.

"The Victorianne property is a unique neighborhood not only because of its architecture but more for its synergy with La Posada where it is located," said Brittany president Jing Serrano.

Among the amenities offered by the property are underground cabling for power, communication and CATV, available wiring for high-speed Internet connection, high-level security alarm system, a tea garden, lily pond, multifunction hall, children's playground, game courts and the swimming pool.

The swimming pool, located at the La Posada clubhouse area, reveals a delightfully charming atmosphere of fun and frolic under the sun.

This 180 square-meter free-form pool adorned with Mediterranean blue tiles is divided into three areas. At a kid-friendly 5-foot deep, the main pool offers a beach entry that welcomes swimmers in. Next to it is the 2-foot deep wading pool where the kids can begin testing the waters.

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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Imelda Guevarra Parafina who died on Decemeber 1, 2005 were extrajudicially settled in accordance with the extrajudicial settlement with self-adjudication of estate by self-heir duly executed before Notary Public Atty Arleen A. Salvacion of Quezon City per Doc 497 Page 101 Book X Series 2005 (PDI-Dec. 17, 24 & 31, 2005)

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NOVENA TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND SAINT JUDE

May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified throughout the whole world now and forever. Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pray for us.

St. Jude, worker of miracles, helper for the helpless, pray for us.

Say nine times a day for nine days. Prayer will be answered by the eighth day, it has never failed.

Thank you very much, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Judo, for favor granted.

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CARLOS GOCHUYU

Now rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord.
*He joined our Creator and his wife **RUTH TANGIMKIN***
on the 29th of December 2005 at the age of 85.

He will be missed by his children **ANTHONY, LUCY & MANUEL, ALBERT & MARILYN, NANCY & DANIEL, ALEXANDER & SUSAN, EMILY & RUBEN**; his grandchildren **GREGORY, KATRINA, ALVIN, RAYMOND, MICHELLE, JOHN, RACHELLE, RYAN, TIFFANY, BERNADETTE & ALBERT, CLAUDINE & BYRON, CANDICE, BRIAN, JOHANN, FAYE, ERICA** and **RITCHIE** and his great grandchildren **ASHLEY** and **CAITLIN**.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, the 4th of January, 2006 at the Everest Memorial Park after the 8:00 A.M. necrological service at St. Stephen's Parish.

"What You give, You do not take away ...
And death is only a horizon
And a horizon is nothing
save the limit of our sight."

In Loving Memory of

MA. LUISA ALBERT ATIENZA

December 13, 1946 – January 1, 1996

On her Tenth Death Anniversary

Jacky, his wife **Cecil**; children **Marti, Charly** and grandson **Nicky** request relatives and friends to remember her in their prayers and to join them at the celebration of the Holy Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Chapel, Camp Gen. Rigoberto J. Atienza, Libis, Quezon City at 3:30 pm, tomorrow, January 1, 2006.

The Holy Mass will also be offered at the following churches:

Sanctuario De San Jose	6:15 PM
Sacred Heart Parish Church	6:30 PM
Christ the King Parish	6:30 PM
Mary the Queen Parish	7:00 PM
St. John Bosco Parish	7:00 PM
Santa Maria della Strada Church	12:00 NN
Assumption Convent	8:00 AM
Our Lady of Montserrat Church	8:30 AM

CRESCENCIANA M. Vda. de ALBANO

(widow of the late **Engr. Sotero E. Albano** of Dingras, Ilocos Norte)

Joined her Creator on 28 December 2005
at the age of 93.

Her bereaved children: **Judge Angelo** and **Dra. Bibiana Caoili**; **Eusebio** and **Erlinda Enriquez**; **Rev. Fr. Policarpo** and **Ma. Rosario**, grandchildren: **Margaret Frances**; **Karla Modesta**; **Oliva Marie**; **Vincenzo Angelo**; **Paul Vincent** and **Aileen Ignacio**; **Patricia Anne**; **Jhoanna Lou** and **Mary Judith**; great-granddaughter: **Anya Danielle**; nephews and nieces; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills East, Mandaluyong City until December 30th after which she will be transferred to Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

Interment will be on the 7th of January 2006 at Dingras Municipal Cemetery after the 7:30 a.m. Mass at the St. Joseph Parish Church.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

God has you in His keeping
We have you in our hearts

Our Beloved
MA. CECILIA UY DIZON
On the day of the 1st Death Anniversary
of her Birth to Eternal Life
December 31, 2005

Her loving husband **Lito, Mama Minda, Papa Mandoy**, brother **Koykoy & Irish / Tyrone**, sister **Bambie & Oscar / Minnolli** request relatives and friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Masses will be celebrated at:

1.	QUEEN OF PEACE CHURCH Bacolod City, Negros Occidental	6:00 AM
2.	ST. SEBASTIAN CATHEDRAL Bacolod City, Negros Occidental	7:00 PM
3.	PARISH OF SAN ANTONIO ABAD Gen. Lacson Ext., Bacolod City, Negros Occidental	7:00 AM
4.	SACRED HEART SHRINE Lizares Ave. (Lupit), Bacolod City, Negros Occidental	6:00 AM
5.	REDEMPTORIST CHURCH North Drive, Bacolod City, Negros Occ.	6:15 AM
6.	ST. CHARLES BORROMEO CATHEDRAL PARISH San Carlos City, Negros Occidental	6:00 AM & 10:00 PM
7.	ST. JOHN MARY VIANNEY SEMINARY Bishops Home, San Julio Subd., San Carlos City, Neg. Occ.	9:30 PM
8.	STO. TOMAS DE VILLANUEVA-RECOLETOS San Carlos City, Negros Occidental	10:30 PM
9.	CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA PARISH OF DUMAGUETE Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental	6:00 AM
10.	OUR LADY OF SOLITUDE CATHOLIC CHURCH 151 West Alejo Road, Palm Spring, California	5:30 PM

"Keep me, O God for in You I take refuge."
Psalm 16:1

MARIA YBARDOLAZA-ABADILLA

Peacefully joined her Creator on 30 December 2005
at the age of 88.

Wife of **CECILIO** (†); children **Ariel & Nerissa, Lulu & Ray, Corrie & Paquito, Flor & Fred**; grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for her eternal rest and everlasting happiness.

Her remains lie in state at the Funeraria Nacional, 264 Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Monday, January 2, 2006, 3 p.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina after the 1 p.m. Mass at Funeraria Nacional.

In lieu of flowers, spiritual bouquets will be appreciated.

BERTOLDO T. RESURRECCION

Retired City Dev't. Officer, DILG Manila

of New Washington, Aklan

Peacefully joined our Lord
on December 28, 2005 at the age of 78.

His bereaved wife **Remedios Obligacion**; children **Jonabel, Al** and **Doree, Van** and **Belinda, Eric** (†), **Dennis** and **Liezel, Randy, Audrey** and **Rey, Marielle**, and **Josette**; grandchildren **Joy** and **Tess, Wendell** and **Jeng, Vanessa, Vancy**, and **Rap-rap**; great grandchildren **Vanjoyce** and **Philip**; brother **Diomedes**; sisters **Clarina, Elvira** and **Fely**; nephews & nieces; other relatives and friends request readers to pray for his soul.

His remains lie in state at Floresco Funeral Homes, 511 A. Mabini St., Caloocan City.

Cremation will be at Eternal Gardens Crematorium on January 3, 2006 at 1:00 p.m.

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Local Civil Registry Office
Province : Iloilo
City : Iloilo
NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that Henry M. Regidor has filed with this office a petition for change of first name from REGIDOR HENRY to HENRY in the birth certificate of Regidor Henry M. Regidor who was born on May 26, 1980 at Brgy. Cacub Koronadal, South Cotabato and whose parents are Elmie M. Masula and Mariano L. Regidor

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than Jan. 15, 2006.

(Sgd.) TERESITA U. JACOMILLE
City Civil Registrar

(PDI – Dec. 24 & 31, 2005)

NFA joins launching of 'Manibela ni Gloria' in Bulacan

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY BULACAN provincial office joined the launching of Manibela ni Gloria Tungo sa Matatag na Republika held recently at the Constantino compound here. The Manibela ni Gloria project is a program for the transport sector being implemented by the Public Transport Affairs Office under the Office of the President. It is geared towards bringing governance closer to the masses and establishing an economically empowered and socially responsible transport sector. NFA Bulacan provincial manager Mar Alvarez said the NFA shall be putting up its own Tindahan ni Gloria Para sa Transport which will be operated by legitimate transport organizations or cooperatives in the province to supplement their livelihood. Present during the launching were Presidential Assistant Ariel Lim; Alvarez; Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, chair of the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC); Representative Eduardo Roquero of the lone of San Jose del Monte City; Representative Lorna Silverio of the 3rd district of Bulacan and local officials of Marilao. For more information on NFA programs, the public may send SMS messages via the Text NFA Program through mobile number 0917-6210927.

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NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publications, if you are:

NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1) Consolacion Ponsalan	186 Dapdap St., Tayoma, Sta. Cruz	Loreto Abordo SS# 03-5034254-4	December 13, 1993
2) Angela Cahanap	Unknown	Paquito Adricula SS# 03-7496115-0	February 19, 2005
3) Zenaida D. Astor	Unknown	Virgilio S. Astor SS# 03-2903022-7	January 11, 2002
4) Susana L. Balages	Unknown	Alfredo D. Balaguis SS# 03-5059197-1	July 27, 2005
5) Angelina Rico Baylon	Mlang, North Cotabato	Julieto N. Baylon SS# 09-2601831-2	May 21, 2005
6) Melody Miranda	Unknown	Bonifacio Beleno SS# 01-0237169-5	July 22, 2005
7) Abelardo Caballes	Unknown	Clemente A. Caballes SS# 04-3213349-3	July 6, 2004
8) Antonio Cabando	San Carlos City	Serminda S. Cabando SS# 03-4109893-3	January 5, 2003
9) Alfredo Carullo	Zone II Labnig, Malinao, Albay	Consolacion C. Carullo SS# 03-6472215-0	May 17, 2005
10) Teofista Florida	Torero Private Road, Tagb. City	Romeo Capili SS# 06-0567926-3	July 12, 2005
11) Eugenio Balverde De Guzman, Jr.	Banga, Meycauayan, Bulacan	Corazon L. Go De Guzman SS# 04-0879318-4	March 29, 2005
12) Ernesto Del Pilar	Prk. Paghidaet, Fabrica Sagay City, Negros Occidental	Lilia Del Pilar SS# 07-0704902-1	February 9, 2003
13) Celia Reyes Gloriane	Unknown	Federico C. Gloriane SS# 03-1474226-1	July 14, 2005
14) Delfin Niduaza	Unknown	Lydia Niduaza SS# 01-0122256-7	September 6, 2005
15) Anicia A. Paralina	Mendoz Crossing East, Tagaytay City, Cavite	Zoilo Paralina SS# 05-0315970-4	March 26, 2005
16) Meriam Salazar John, Romeo Jr., Lynie & Christ	Inas, Mlang, Cotabato	Romeo S. Salazar SS# 09-0118285-2	November 7, 2004
17) William San Juan Joselita San Juan	Ventanilla St., Pasay City	Jose H. San Juan, Sr. SS# 03-1369025-3	August 1, 2005
18) Restituto De Dios	Sta. Rita de Casia, Sta. Rita, Pampanga	Evangelina G. Sazon SS# 03-0022042-5	July 21, 1996
19) Luzminda Soriano	Unknown	Anatalio S. Soriano SS# 03-3918796-6	September 21, 2005
20) Richard Pomarada Tesalona	Brgy. Canuyop, Mulanay, Quezon	Teresita Rocero Tesalona SS# 33-5953632-9	February 28, 2005
21) Annabelle Tiber	Hda Urbasa, Escalante City, Negros Occidental	Gerardo Tiber SS# 07-0594835-7	March 11, 1999

– Nothing follows –

(PDI - Dec. 31, 2005)

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Offbeat science stories in 2005

ALONGSIDE TRAGEDIES, wars and natural disasters, 2005 has brought its share of unusual, outrageous, tragi-comic and just downright silly news items. Among the oddities served up by the world of science:

- A Swiss woman sees colors and experiences tastes when she hears music, scientists at the University of Zurich in Switzerland reported. The rare phenomenon, known as synesthesia, was confirmed in a 27-year-old professional musician, who saw violet on hearing an F sharp and red on a middle C.

DNA samples

- Researchers at National University in La Jolla, California, threw a dinner party and then analyzed the leftovers to see if their guests left significant DNA samples on them. Complete profiles were recovered from 43 percent and partial ones from 33 percent. Such work could be useful in catching burglars, who often like tucking into the food found in their victims' kitchens.

- African elephants have at least one thing in common with parrots: they imitate sounds they hear around them, said scientists in the United States and Norway. A captive female jumbo in Kenya was found to imitate the noise of trucks on a nearby road, while a male kept with Asian elephants at a zoo in Switzerland mimicked their chirping noises.

Alarm clock

- Enterprising students at Brown University in the United States invented an alarm clock that monitors its user's brainwaves and works out the best time to wake him or her up. The only drawback: the sleeper must wear a headband equipped with electrodes.

- Alexis Lemaire, a 24-year-old student in Reims, France, claimed a world record for working out the 13th root of a 200-digit number by mental arithmetic. The feat, checked by a notary, took him 48 minutes and 51 seconds.

Value of pi

- Akira Haraguchi, a 59-year-old psychiatric counselor in Japan, recited from memory the value of "pi," a constant which consists of an infinite string of digits, to 83,431 decimal places. It took him 13 hours to beat the previous record, also set by a Japanese, of a mere 54,000 digits.

- The guardians of animal nomenclature had mixed feelings over a proposal to name three newly discovered species of slime-mold beetle after US President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. A pair of insect experts reserved the names *Agathidium bushi*, *Agathidium cheneyi* and *Agathidium rumsfeldi* for their latest creepy-crawlies.

Rock rat

- An odd-looking rodent spotted on sale for meat in a Laotian food market turned out to be not only a new species but also the first member of a new family of mammals to be identified in more than three decades. An alert member of the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society noticed the creature, which was baptized a stone-dwelling puzzle-mouse, or, more simply, "rock rat."

- Proof that scientists have a sense of humor: the annual Ig Nobel awards, which give spoof prizes to the most offbeat research. This year's crop went to the inventor of an alarm that rings then runs away and hides thus ensuring that the sleeper has to get up to turn it off, to scientists who researched whether humans swim faster in syrup rather than in water, to British boffins who analyzed the electrical activity of a locust's brain cell while the insect watched a "Star Wars" movie, and to a German team that calculated the pressure produced in penguins' anuses when the birds expel their feces.

AFP

Professorial chair on liver diseases established

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION FOR the Study of Liver Diseases Inc. (PASLD) and the Philippine Foundation for Liver Disease (PFLD) recently made a donation of P500,000 to the St. Luke's College of Medicine-William H. Quasha Memorial for the establishment of the PASLD-PFLD Professorial Chair in Liver Diseases.

On hand to formalize the agreement were Dr. Joven R. Cuanang, PASLD chair; Jose F.G. Ledesma, president and CEO of St. Luke's Medical Center; Dr. Brigido L. Carandang Jr., president and dean of St. Luke's College of Medicine and Dr. Juliet Gopez-Cervantes, president of the PASL and PFSLD.

The PASLD and PFLD aim to promote the development, propagation, practice and application of knowledge about liver diseases. They also endeavor to advance medical, scientific and other professional expertise in liver diseases by providing venues and assistance for education, training and research, and to network with competent physicians, scientists and other professionals and organizations toward the achievement of this purpose.

Diseases of the liver rank among the most common ailments in the country. It is quite unfortunate that patients are generally unaware of any damage to their liver for years. When the symptoms show up, the disease is already complicated or at its advanced stage.

Puzzle solutions and winners

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

ONCE MORE I UNDERESTIMATED readers. My inbox has more than 200 solutions, and in fact, on Christmas Day, one day after the puzzles were published, there were already 10 winners. I decided to award the next five winners, so we have 15 official winners.

Congratulations to the following readers, who each will receive an autographed copy of "Arithmetricks" (in order): Gerard Gumban [bod_ph@yahoo.com], Dta [pc_list2@yahoo.com], Ryan Liwanag [rsliwanag@tri-isys.com], Ramon Marfil [no_chi_8@yahoo.com], Eugene Tan [ettan@pacific.net.ph], Kenwin Ku [scorpio_kendwin@yahoo.com], Aristotle Manuel [ariesmanuel@hotmail.com], Ramil Plofino [ramilby@yahoo.com], Korina Ada Tanyu [e-mail withheld upon request], Vic Torrado [victorrado@yahoo.com], Noel Estoperez [regis@cc.tuat.ac.jp], Brennen Chua [Brennen.Chua@etelecare.com], Priscilla Lazaro-Samonte [priscillaalice_lazaro@yahoo.com], Jerome Asuncion [jomer_asuncion@yahoo.com], Sancho Ramos [mhye_cee@yahoo.com].

Readers who got four out of five solutions are Lance Katigbak [lancekatigbak@gmail.com], Randl Morales [fresh_cake90@yahoo.com], Ian Gelito [ian_gelito@yahoo.com], and Jimmy Arevalo [jhrushmore@yahoo.com].

1. Ben walks up and down a small mountain, and the entire round trip is six kilometers. His girlfriend Alice walks at half Ben's speed. When Ben reaches the top of the mountain, he turns around, walks back, and meets Alice part of the way. Ben continues down to the bottom of the hill at his original speed. Alice then follows him, also at her original speed. How far does Alice walk?

Dta explains: Ben walks twice as fast as Alice, and the round trip is 6 km, so uphill is 3 km and downhill is also 3 km. When Ben walks 3 km (reaches the top), Alice walks 1.5 km. When Ben walks 4 km (3 km up and 1 km down), he meets Alice at the point where Alice is 2 km up (this is the same point 1 km down from the top). Since Alice doesn't go all the way to the top, she has gone 2 km up and has to go 2 km down. Alice walks for a total of 4 km.

Mango trees

2. How can you plant 10 mango trees in five rows of four trees each?

Eugene Tan writes: Some mango trees must be used in more than one row, otherwise we'll need 20 trees to get five rows of four. Santa appears as a drawing, so he is clue. What shape has five rows which are appropriate for the Christmas season? A star! So arrange the 10 trees in a star-shaped pattern, resulting in five rows of four trees each. Five trees are the points of the star and five trees are at the intersections of the lines.

3. What digit does each letter represent? A given letter always represents the same digit. The equation is: The number ABCDE multiplied by 4 is equal to the number EDCBA. What digit does A represent? How about B? C? D? E?

Kendwin Ku writes: A can only be 1 or 2, since A x 3 yields a two-digit number, making the product a six digit number. If A = 1, E x 4 should end in 1. There is no such possibility. Therefore A = 2 and E = 8. Since A x 4 = E, this means that there is no carryover when multiplying B by 4. Again, B can only be 1 or 2. 8 x 4 = 32, therefore, 4D + 3 should end in B. If B = 1, we can find a D such that 4D + 3 = 31. By trying the numbers, we find that D = 7. 7 x 4 = 31. Therefore, 4C + 3 should end in C. By trial and error, we find that C = 9. So A is 2, B is 1, C is 9, D is 7 and E is 8.

Jumbled letters

4. How good are you in English? The three letters missing are the same for every line (though the letters are jumbled). Fill in the blanks to make four English words.

1st word: _P__
2nd word: P___
3rd word: __P_
4th word: ___P

Several answers are possible, and the easiest is to think of S, N or T. We have: SPAN, PANS, NAPS, SNAP; SPOT, POST, TOPS, STOP; SPAR, PARS, RAPS, RASP; SPIN, PINS, NIPS, SNIP; SPAN, PANS, NAPS, SNAP. Ramil Plofino gives an interesting set: APER (copycat, emulator, imitator), PEAR, RAPE, REAP.

5. My maker does not want me. My buyer does not use me. My user does not see me. What am I?

Ryan Liwanag answers: a coffin. The maker wants to sell it but want to be in it. The buyer is a relative or someone responsible for a funeral and will definitely not use the coffin. The user does not see it because he's dead. Aristotle Manuel adds: A burial urn.

Happy New Year!

We're still OK health-wise

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

AS WE END THE YEAR, WE have so much to be grateful for, health-wise. Despite harsh circumstances, within and beyond our control, our healthcare delivery system has not really deteriorated as fast as some doomsday prophets have predicted. And our national government must be relying heavily on God's providential care, so the budget allocated for healthcare is relatively one of the lowest in the world.

Despite everything, there is no indication that the healthcare situation is on the brink of collapse. Luck must be on our side, too.

So far, we have been spared of the dreaded avian flu, potentially the next global pandemic. After a false alarm sometime in May of a possible localized outbreak in a farm in Bulacan, there has been no report of any possible infection. Neighboring countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and China have reported several human deaths attributed to the bird flu. Controlling the bird flu is like shooting a moving target since it mutates faster than our smartest scientists could come up with a specific vaccine for it.

The antiviral Tamiflu, which had been effective in favorably altering the clinical course of the bird flu, seems to be losing its efficacy in some instances lately.

It's heartening to note that the Department of Health has a comprehensive plan to contain and control a potential outbreak in our country. But we're not sure if we have the resources and logistics to implement it when an outbreak happens. We'll have to rely on foreign assistance.

Migration

The other health-related concern that will most likely linger in next years is the continuing migration of Filipino health professionals, particularly doctors, to rich countries. More than 18,000 Filipino doctors have already migrated to the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, making the country the second biggest source of physicians next to India.

With an aging population in developed countries, one can logically assume that the demand for international medical graduates will increase in the next 10 years and worsen the problem of physician migration from countries like ours to rich nations.

According to a report of the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines, more than 1,000 private hospitals have already closed down since 2000. The funny thing is that the Department of Labor and Employment has dismissed as baseless the "medical brain drain." The Labor secretary was even quoted as saying that the current exodus is somehow good because the remaining doctors will get better pay.

If the government does not see it as a major problem, there will be no sense of urgency to address it. Perhaps the government sees the exodus as an opportunity for more dollar remittances from doctors and healthcare professionals.

Various groups headed by the Philippine Medical Association have already submitted proposals on how to minimize the migration of Filipino doctors. I have yet to hear or see any concrete steps being taken by the government to address this problem. The healthcare problem must have taken a back seat to the political survival of the government.

The bayanihan spirit comes in handy in times like these. Nongovernmental organizations, medical foundations and allied health professionals' organizations have become more active in pitching in their share to make sure that the one-third of Filipinos who rely mainly on free medical care for their basic health care are still adequately taken care of. Hopefully, the spirit can last long enough until the government makes its own move.

Happy New Year to everyone!

Advances in medical imaging crucial for quick diagnosis

By Charles E. Buban

THE CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING CAPABILITY of medical imaging is helping more and more doctors worldwide to quickly and accurately diagnose cardiovascular problems, eliminating unnecessary invasive diagnostic procedures while guiding them to appropriate treatment decisions.

"Imaging technology today is providing a far more accurate and insightful glimpse into the patient's body than ever before. As a result, doctors can now get to the heart of the medical matter more quickly, more effectively and as much as possible, in a noninvasive and painless procedure for the patient," said Dr. Joseph Coselli, chief of Adult Cardiac Surgery at the Texas Heart Institute and associate chief of the Cardiovascular Service at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Texas.

Coselli, who specializes in the diseases of the aorta and has performed over 2,000 repairs of aortic aneurysms, recently spoke before the 17th biennial congress of the Association of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons of Asia in Makati City.

Helpful in aneurysms

"Improved medical imaging systems, like today's 64-slice scanners, are especially helpful in evaluating patients with aortic aneurysm since they may help determine whether a patient should undergo surgery or is a good candidate for stent grafting," he said.

A stent graft is a fabric tube that reinforces a weak spot in a blood vessel.

Aortic aneurysm, or the stretching and bulging in the section of the wall of the aorta, is dangerous because it can go undetected. Left untreated, it can rupture and cause severe internal bleeding and, often, death.

Coselli said today's generation of medical scanners combine unrivaled image quality with remarkable speed, producing detailed pictures in a few seconds and providing sharp, clear, three-dimensional images, including blood vessels.

The technology has been helpful particularly for studying the heart since the scanners can provide clear noninvasive images of the heart and its major vessels as well as the location of the problem, if any.

Early detection, according to Coselli, allows doctors to closely monitor changes in the size or other characteristics of the aneurysm and helps them measure the risk for rupture and to compare the risk of rupture with the risks of surgery.

"The sooner we can identify the problem, the sooner we can intervene in its progression or initiate appropriate treatment," said Coselli.

Super! Countdown
359 days 'til X-mas!

Super!
[illegible] . pop culture . entertainment . recreation

E-mail: super@inquirer.com.ph
your feedback: inquirer sup name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

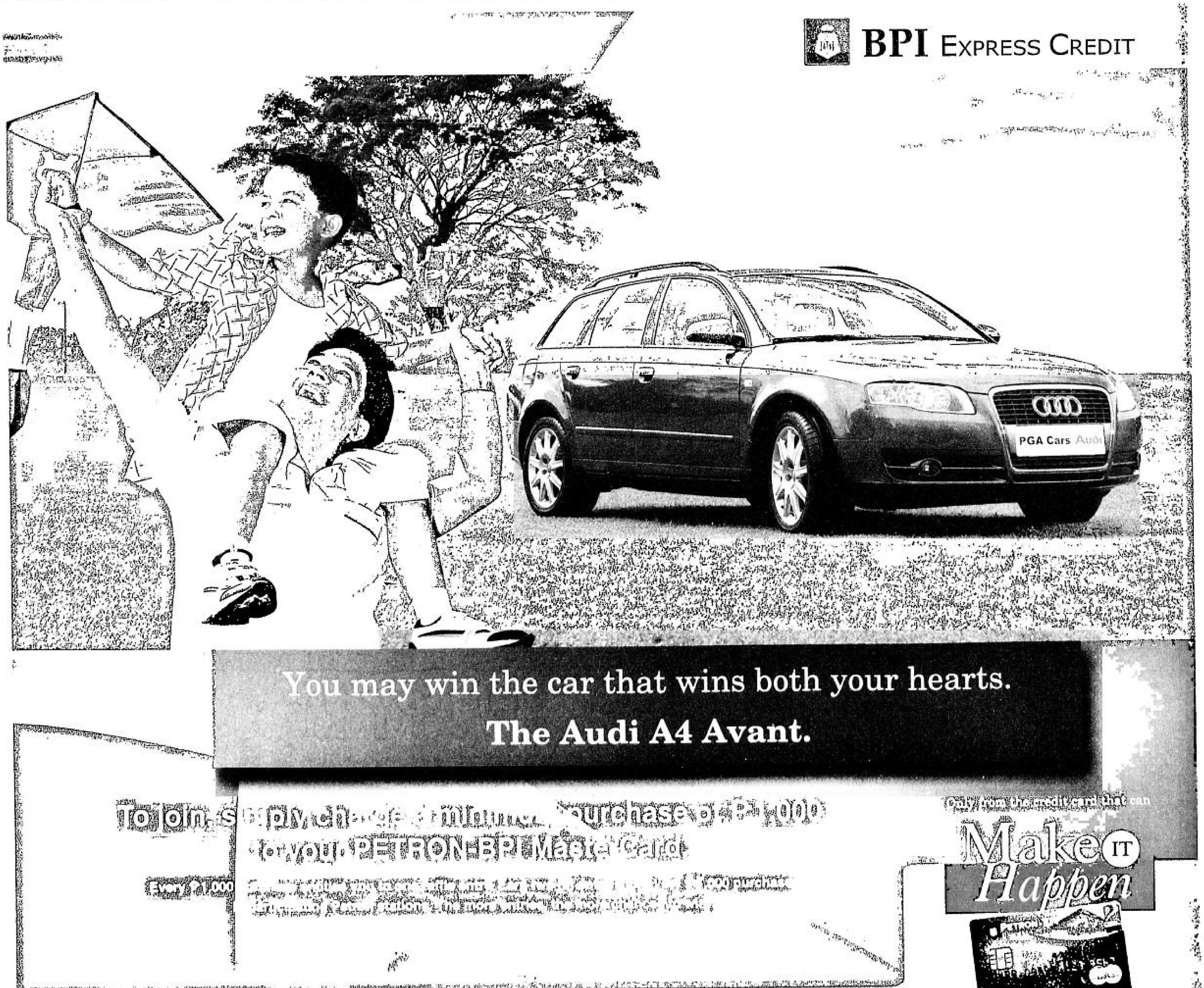
Editor **Pam Pastor**
Creative Director **Tim Yap**

Blast off

26 Super! names that will fire up your 2006 page C3

Sam Milby, Nathan Lopez, Isabel Diaz, Uma Barum, Mariel Rodriguez, Toni Gonzaga, Mario Cornejo, Bombi Balquiedra, Sam Concepcion, Danielle Cojuangco, Chrizenda Cecilio, Patty Ortega, Ivar Aseron, Ivan Zalameda, Victor Consunji, Champ Lui Pio, Rainer Castillo, Ivan Carapiet, Rafa Valdes, Princess Violago, Andrew Wolff, Claude Jean, Katrina Halili, Polo Ravales, Isabel Oli and Savannah Lumen

Photography:
VICTOR CONSUNJI
Digital artwork by
MARLONE RUBIO
Cover star: PATTY ORTEGA
Pyro Olympics photo by
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN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BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
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Audi
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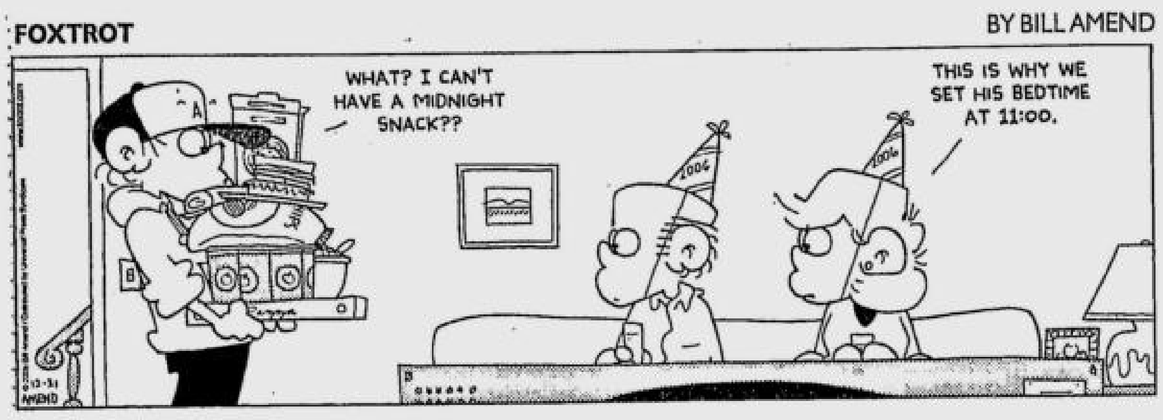
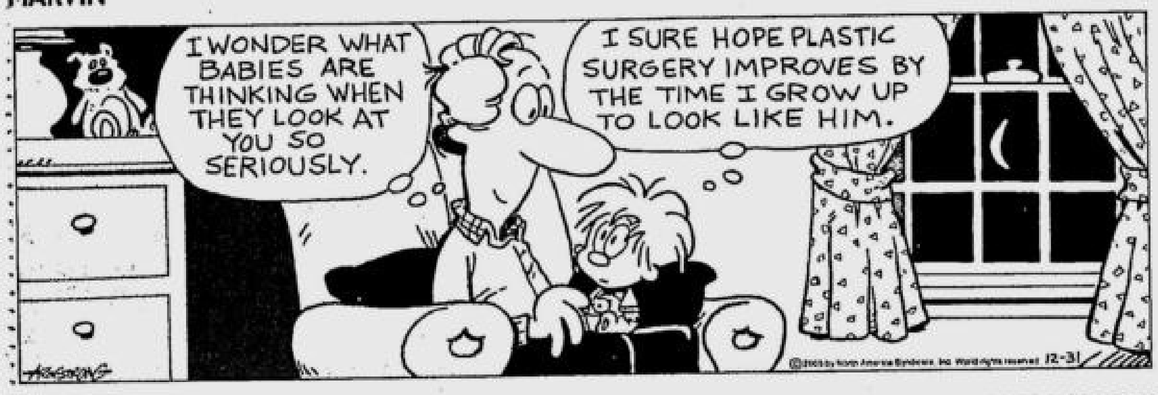
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT? I CAN'T HAVE A MIDNIGHT SNACK??
THIS IS WHY WE SET HIS BEDTIME AT 11:00.
2006
2006
12-31 AMEND

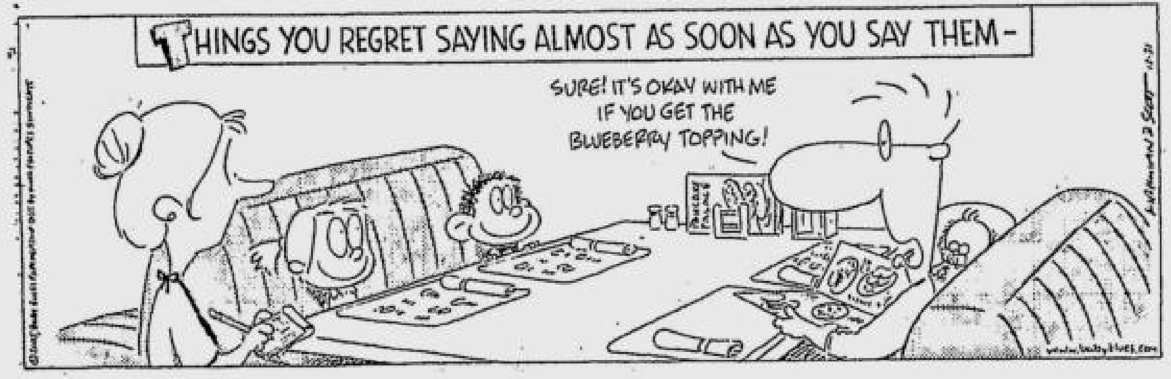
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I WONDER WHAT BABIES ARE THINKING WHEN THEY LOOK AT YOU SO SERIOUSLY.
I SURE HOPE PLASTIC SURGERY IMPROVES BY THE TIME I GROW UP TO LOOK LIKE HIM.
ARMSTRONG
12-31

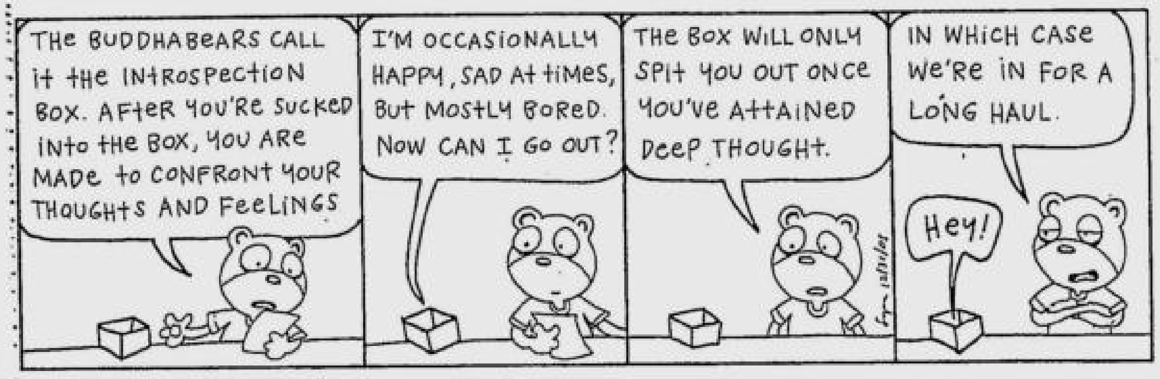
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING ALMOST AS SOON AS YOU SAY THEM–
SURE! IT'S OKAY WITH ME IF YOU GET THE BLUEBERRY TOPPING!
www.babyblues.com

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


The BUDDHABEARS CALL it the INtRosPectioN Box. AFteR YOU'Re SucKed into the Box, YOU ARE MADE to CONFRONT YOUR THOUGHTS AND FeeLINGS
I'M OCCASIONALLY HAPPY, SAD At times, But MOSTLY BoRED. Now CAN I Go OUT?
The Box WILL ONLY SPit YOU OUT ONCE YOU'Ve AttAINED Deep THOUGHt.
IN WHICH CASE We'Re IN FOR A LONG HAUL.
Hey!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have excellent taste, and you appreciate beauty. Because you apply this good taste to your own wardrobe and appearance, you're well-dressed and well-groomed. You're also realistic about your abilities. You appreciate the efforts of others. The year ahead will be highly social. Accept all invitations. Schmooze with friends and groups. Romance can bloom!

Birthdate of: Ben Kingsley, actor; Anthony Hopkins, actor; Val Kilmer, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a wonderful day to research or study philosophy, metaphysics, religion and politics. It's also a good day to make travel plans and deal with medicine and the law.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your ability to research anything is fabulous today! Dig for answers. Get to the bottom of insurance matters, shared property, debt and taxes.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Conversations with partners and close friends are intense today. Somebody's trying to make you over, or you're trying to do this to somebody else. Lighten up!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can get a tremendous amount done at work today. Nothing is too much trouble. You have great powers of concentration today. Tackle jobs that require energy and persistence.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You want to get to the bottom of something. You want to know the complete truth about something related to children or romantic relationships. (No more self-deception.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Conversations with family members are intense today. Nevertheless, you will get to the bottom of something. It's a good day to make repairs and deal with garbage and recycling at home.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have a penetrating mind today. You can spot a phony a mile away. Whatever you do today, you'll easily see the subtext in things. It's as if you have X-ray vision.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You have strong ideas today about financial matters. Perhaps you desperately want to buy something; perhaps you have new moneymaking ideas. You want to improve your financial picture.

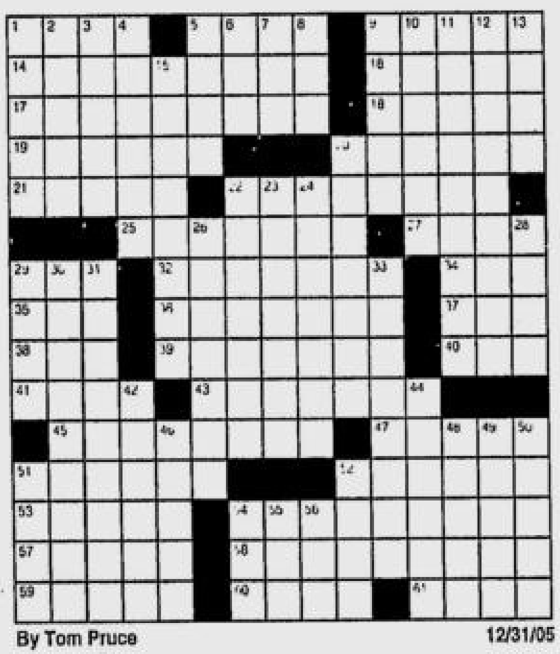
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): All your conversations are profound, intense and emotional today. You want the bottom line. You're extremely convincing and persuasive in whatever you have to say.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your researching abilities are tops today! You have the mind of a sleuth. Go after any answers you're hoping to find. Chances are, you'll be successful. Your powers of concentration are excellent.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): A friend might try to convince you of something today. Possibly, you will try to convince someone else of something. Be careful. Conversations are very intense right now.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't cross swords with authority figures today. (This includes Mom.) People have a desire to improve others or make them over today. Stay out of the line of fire!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Tom Pruce
Chicago, IL

12/31/05

ACROSS
1 Bloke
5 James of "Elf"
9 Coats and cloaks
14 Friml operetta
16 Sound track
17 Solitary egotist
18 Donor
19 "__ from Outer Space"
20 "Death in __"
21 Recumbent
22 "Mean Streets" director
25 On the beat: pref.
27 Aswan and Hoover
29 Big galoot
32 Ennui
34 Actress Arthur
35 Charlie Parker's instrument
36 Chilean desert
37 Human seat
38 Garfunkel or Carney
39 More ungainly
40 Ernie of the PGA
41 Component
43 "Call Me" group
45 French and Horne
47 DEA employees
51 Andy of "Andy's Gang"
52 Zen enlightenment
53 Concepts
54 Fashioned anew
57 Song of mourning
58 "To Kill a Mockingbird" writer
59 Two quartets together
60 Inning parts
61 Numidian serpent

DOWN
1 Tight perm
2 Pay tribute to
3 Jetsons' dog
4 Juan and Evita
5 Cleveland team, to fans
6 Exist
7 Jordan's nickname
8 Fish catcher
9 Pay
10 Made useless
11 Prudent
12 In stages
13 Irked
15 Armored-car item
20 Moved noisily at high speed
22 Like illegible signatures
23 Verify
24 Confers holy orders upon
26 Worth mentioning
28 Dupes
29 Pronto acronym
30 EMS worker
31 Opposite of 17A
33 Wine bath?
42 Process for sorting the injured
44 Diner patrons
46 Map within a map
48 Esther of "Good Times"
49 Slink
50 Facets
51 Queen of Carthage
52 Pacifying offers
54 Pi follower
55 Water of France
56 A-Team member

Friday's Puzzle Solved

W	I	F	E		M	O	T	I	F		G	A	P	E
H	O	A	X		A	M	O	C	O		O	T	I	S
O	N	T	H	E	W	A	T	E	R	F	R	O	N	T
			A	I	S	H	A		T	R	E	N	C	H
C	A	J	U	N		A	L	P	H	A		C	E	E
I	T	I	S	S	O			L	E	I		E	R	R
T	I	L	T		V	O	C	A	B	L	E			
E	T	T	E		E	R	A	T	O		A	P	S	E
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S	O	U		C	H	O	P	S		J	I	N	G	O
T	O	N	G	U	E		I	O	W	A	N			
U	N	D	E	R	T	H	E	R	A	I	N	B	O	W
T	E	L	L		O	A	T	E	R		E	U	R	O
E	Y	E	S		P	L	A	N	S		R	Y	A	N

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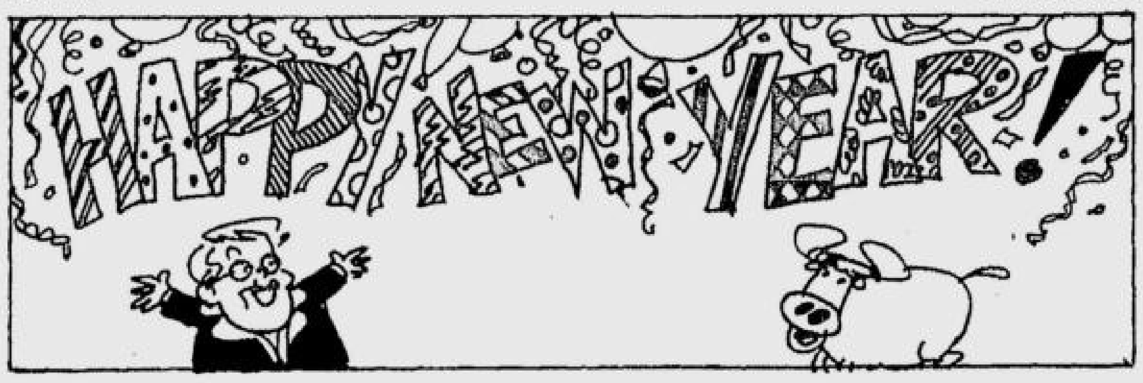
12/31/05

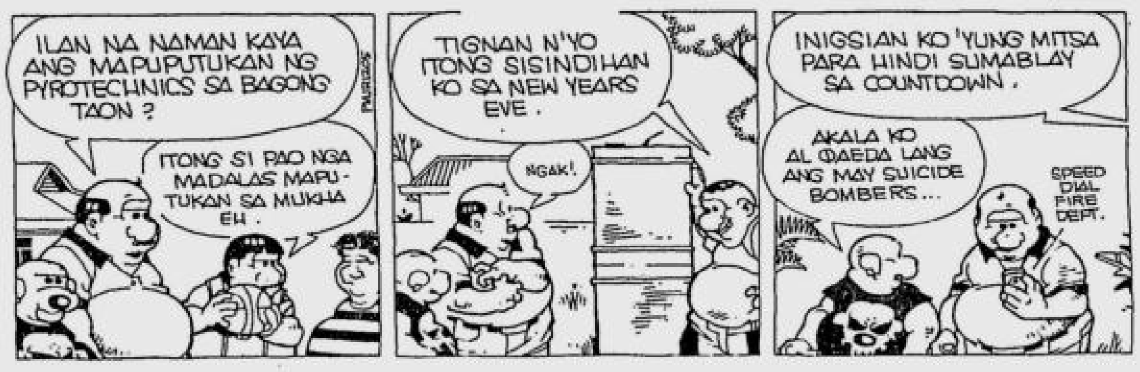
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HAPPY NEW YEAR!

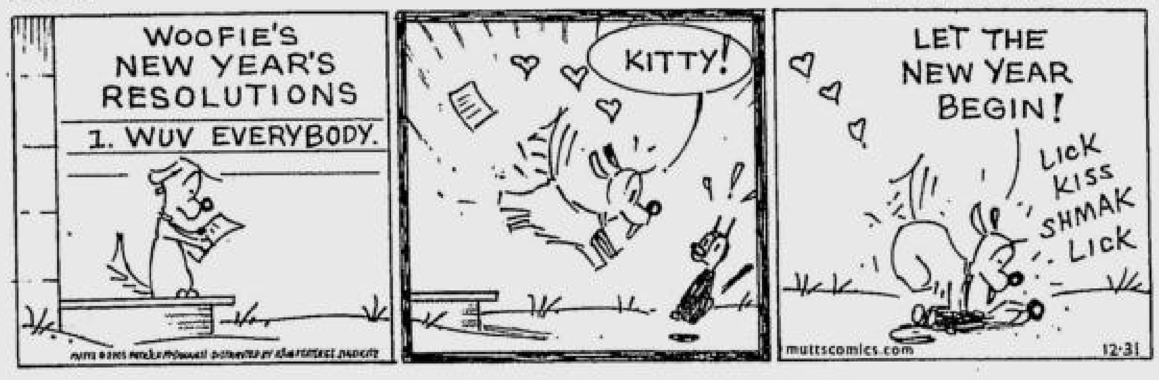
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ILAN NA NAMAN KAYA ANG MAPUPUTUKAN NG PYROTECHNICS SA BAGONG TAON ?
ITONG SI PAO NGA MADALAS MAPU-TUKAN SA MUKHA EH .
TIGNAN N'YO ITONG SISINDIHAN KO SA NEW YEARS EVE .
NGAK!
INIGSIAN KO 'YUNG MITSA PARA HINDI SUMABLAY SA COUNTDOWN .
AKALA KO AL QAEDA LANG ANG MAY SUICIDE BOMBERS...
SPEED DIAL FIRE DEPT.

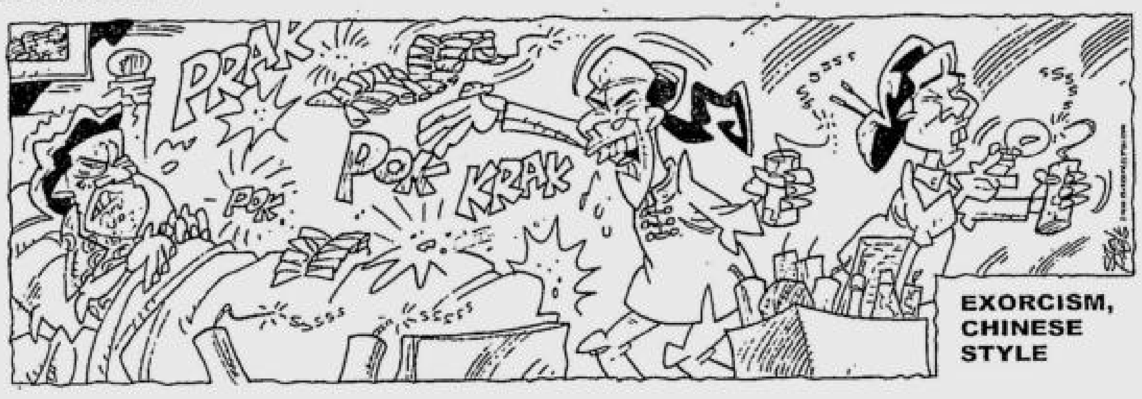
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WOOFIE'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
1. WUV EVERYBODY.
KITTY!
LET THE NEW YEAR BEGIN!
LICK KISS SHMAK LICK
muttscomics.com
12·31

DIVINE COMEDY

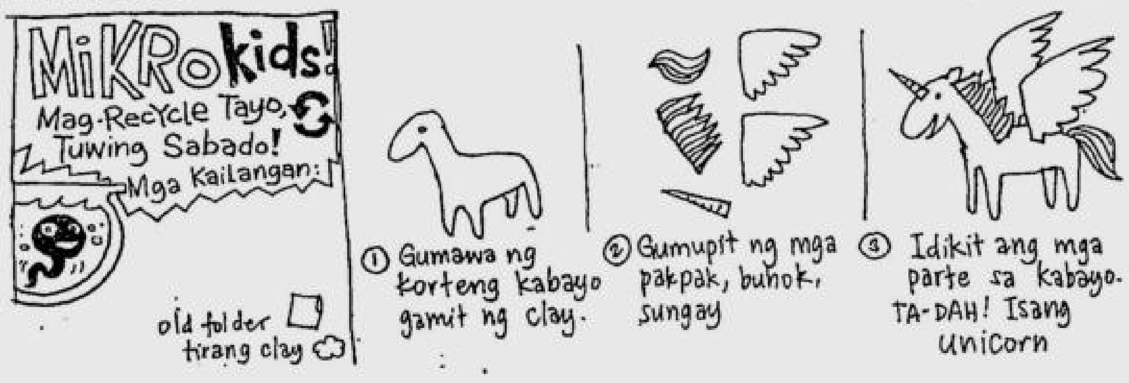
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


PRAK
POK
KRAK
POK
SSSSS
SSSSS

EXORCISM, CHINESE STYLE

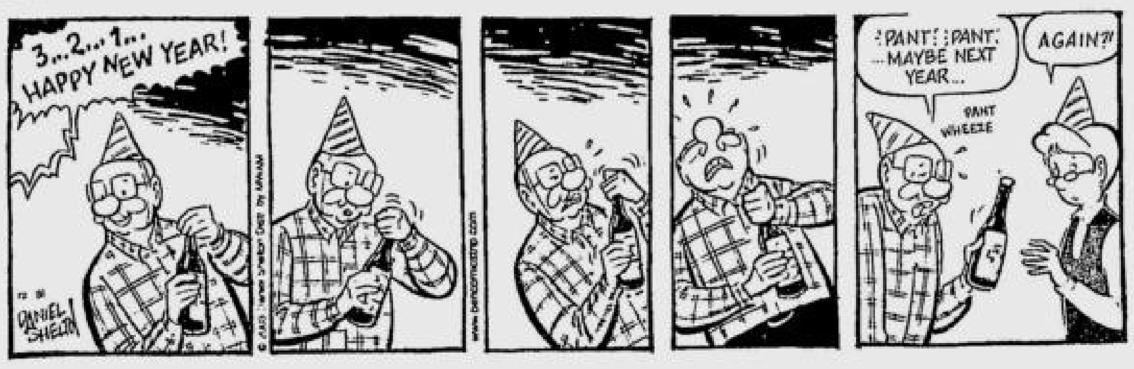
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRokids!
Mag-Recycle Tayo, Tuwing Sabado!
Mga Kailangan:
old folder
tirang clay
① Gumawa ng korteng kabayo gamit ng clay.
② Gumupit ng mga pakpak, buhok, sungay
③ Idikit ang mga parte sa kabayo. TA-DAH! Isang unicorn

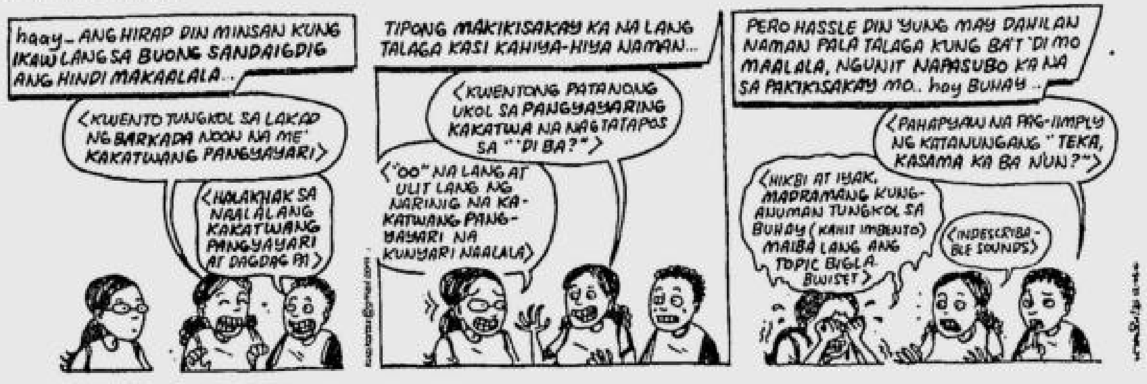
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


3...2...1... HAPPY NEW YEAR!
PANT! PANT! ...MAYBE NEXT YEAR...
PANT WHEEZE
AGAIN?!
DANIEL SHELTON

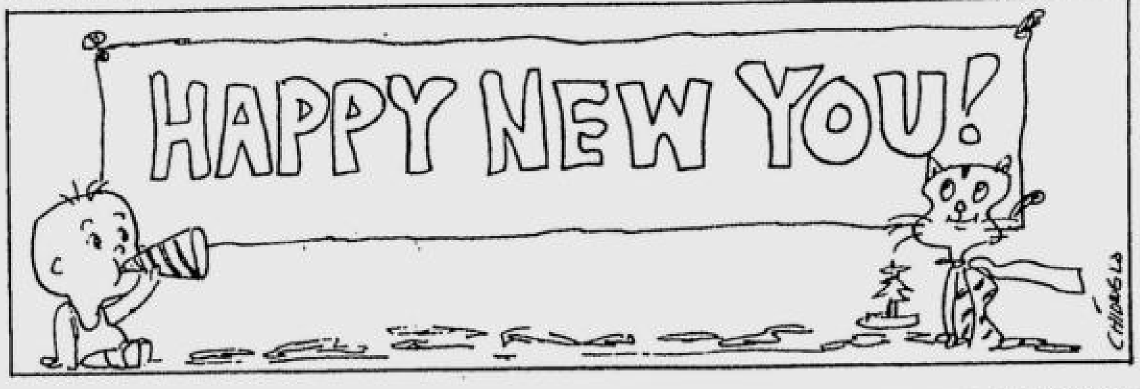
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


haay... ANG HIRAP DIN MINSAN KUNG IKAW LANG SA BUONG SANDAIGDIG ANG HINDI MAKAALALA...
<KWENTO TUNGKOL SA LAKAD NG BARKADA NOON NA ME' KAKATWANG PANGYAYARI>
<HALAKHAK SA NAALALANG KAKATWANG PANGYAYARI AT DAGDAG PA>
TIPONG MAKIKISAKAY KA NA LANG TALAGA KASI KAHIYA-HIYA NAMAN...
<KWENTONG PATANONG UKOL SA PANGYAYARING KAKATWA NA NAGTATAPOS SA "'DI BA?">
<"OO" NA LANG AT ULIT LANG NG NARINIG NA KAKATWANG PANGYAYARI NA KUNYARI NAALALA>
PERO HASSLE DIN 'YUNG MAY DAHILAN NAMAN PALA TALAGA KUNG BA'T 'DI MO MAALALA, NGUNIT NAPASUBO KA NA SA PAKIKISAKAY MO.. hay BUHAY...
<PAHAPYAW NA PAG-IMPLY NG KATANUNGANG "TEKA, KASAMA KA BA NUN?">
<HIKBI AT IYAK. MADRAMANG KUNG-ANUMAN TUNGKOL SA BUHAY (KAHIT IMBENTO) MAIBA LANG ANG TOPIC BIGLA. BWISET>
<INDESCRIBABLE SOUNDS>

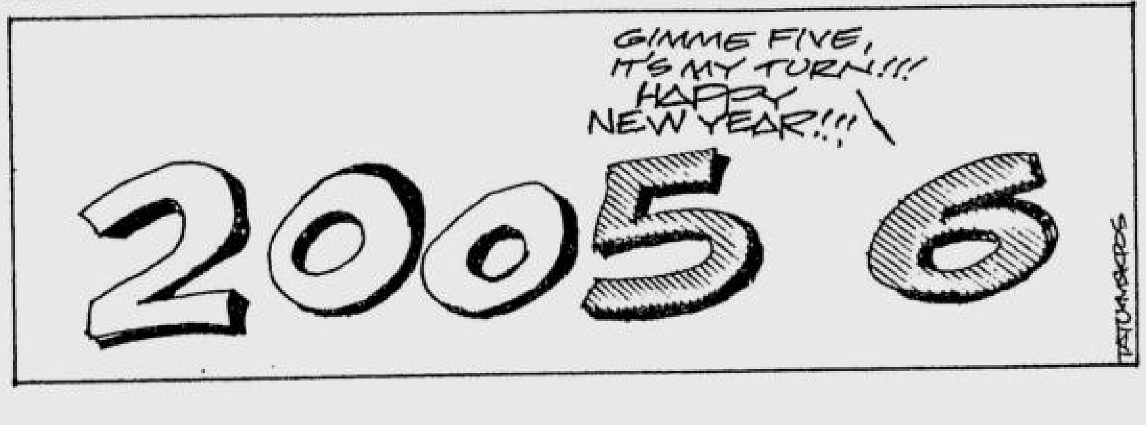
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HAPPY NEW YOU!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


GIMME FIVE, IT'S MY TURN!!! HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!
2005 6
TATUMAKROS

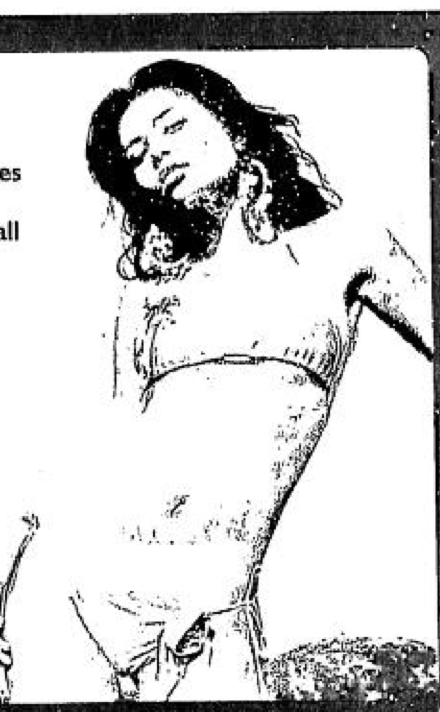
26 to watch out for in 2006

Tim Yap

SKYROCKETED. THAT'S WHAT happened to the careers of last year's batch of Super!'s "to watch out for" list.

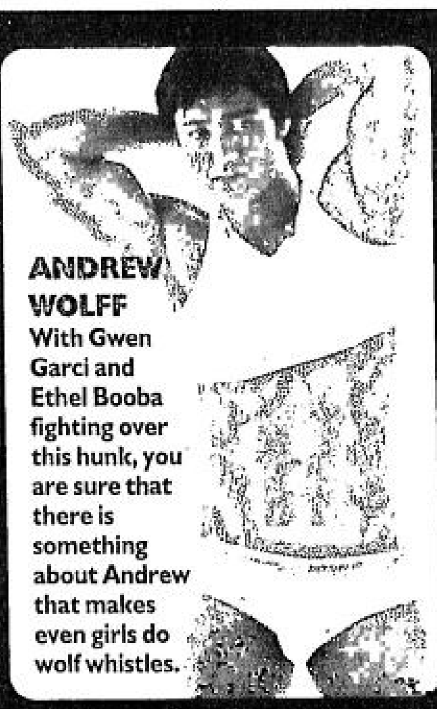
One got the plum role of the nation's stone-swallowing super heroine while another opened the scene's super club. A lot of their faces filled up our highways via giant billboards shot by top-notch photographers who also belonged to the list. Some got elevated to icon status, while the others earned their millions just by doing what they loved to do.

Instead of looking back on the year that was, we take a peek at our Super! crystal ball and predict the peeps—from actors and models to DJs and artists—who will shake, rattle and rock your 2006.



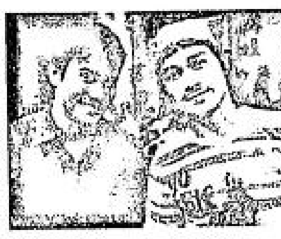
CHRIZENDA CECILIO AND PATTY ORTEGA
Both are fashion photographer's favorites for their chameleon-like qualities and freshness. Expect to see them splashed all over the glossies next year.

KATRINA HALILI
Her FHM cover is selling like hotcakes. She has a sense of humor, too. How talented! She can tickle your funny bone and give you a boner at the same time.



ANDREW WOLFF
With Gwen Garci and Ethel Booba fighting over this hunk, you are sure that there is something about Andrew that makes even girls do wolf whistles.

DANIELLE COJUANGCO
Her clean and wholesome Bayo ads are just the start for this fresh-faced lass who is also a champion equestrienne.

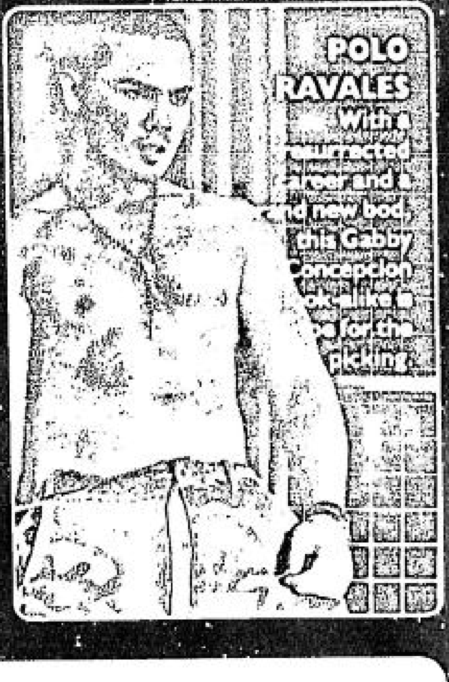


SAM MILBY
He is the latest heartthrob whose appeal stretches from the corporate environs of Ayala to the hovels of Tondo. People have compared him to Piolo Pascual. Oh, and he can sing, too.

KALA
This new band by JP Tanchangco intends to bring the Manila sound to the Super! generation. Their Rock Edition CD is making super waves in the city. Manila, Manila, I keep coming back to Manila!

CLAUDE JEAN
Cebu has been known to breed the hottest models and here's the latest king from the Queen [illegible] of the So[illegible] show biz next for this French Pinoy looker?

SAM CONCEPCION
As the first monthly winner of Little Big Star, he has been making waves on the musical front, even fronting for Christian Bautista (both are managed by Carlo Orosa). Watch him sing his way to 2006.



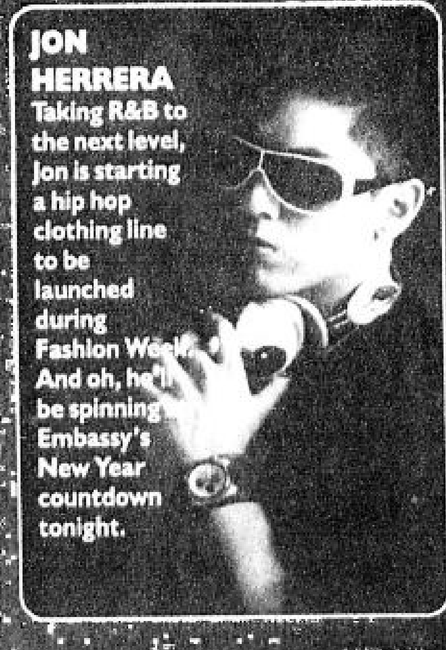
POLO RAVALES
With a resurrected career and a hard new bod, this Gabby Concepcion look-alike is ripe for the picking.

BOMBI BALQUIEDRA
Secret no more. DJ Bombi will blast off this year with his blonde 'do and turntable skills that will surely have partyphiles dancing nonstop.

ISABEL DIAZ
The dusky teenage daughter of Gloria Diaz may seem shy at first—but once the cameras start clicking, she becomes a super Human.

RAINIER CASTILLO
Coming up, a "Jologs Guide" show where he gets teamed up with Ethel Booba. If this clicks, he gets catapulted into the elite league of young hosts which this town so needs. Jologs rule!

RAFA VALDES, PRINCESS VIOLAGO AND IVAN CARAPIET
These three will inject young show biz with much needed class and breeding with an O.C.-type of show coming soon. That's hot.



JON HERRERA
Taking R&B to the next level, Jon is starting a hip hop clothing line to be launched during Fashion Week. And oh, he'll be spinning at Embassy's New Year countdown tonight.

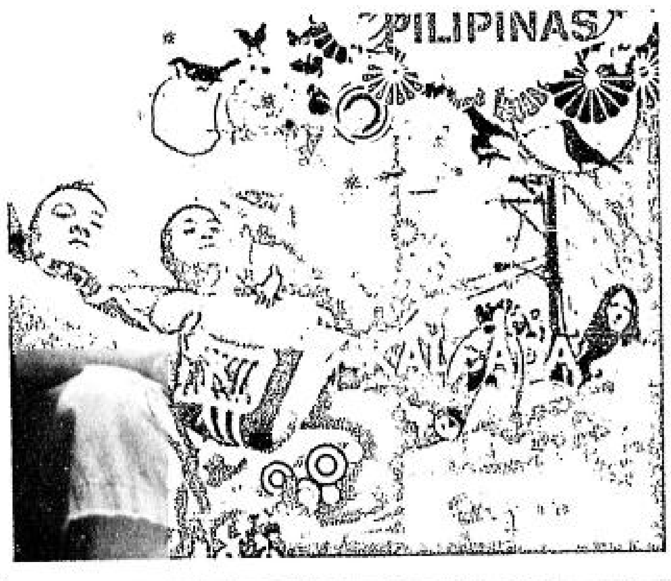
TONI GONZAGA
Her star will continue to shine, this time as a recording artist. Her comic timing is a big plus, too. We just love women who can make us laugh.

VICTOR CONSUNJI
Consistently challenging himself by collaborating with artists for his photo exhibits featuring his celebrity friends, Vic will be getting more than his fair share of high-gloss advertising accounts.

IVAR ASERON
It's his time to move onto the big league. His designs have that avant garde quality but are still very wearable. Let's welcome Ivar to the A-list.

MONSTER JIMENEZ AND MARIO CORNEJO
They are bound to go big time with the release of their film "Big Time" this January. From indie to mainstream, hopping from one to the other has never been this rewarding.

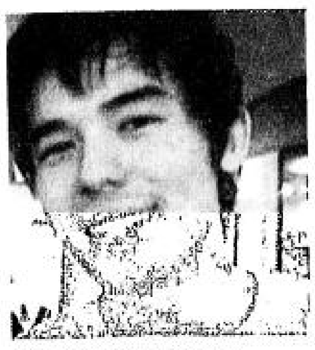
IVAN ZALAMEDA
His Global One party company intends to take parties to another level. Let's toast to more people who know how to celebrate life!



TEAM MANILA
Jowee and Raymond are the designers behind this design duo that is putting Manila on the global design map. With stylized versions of Quiapo and Divisoria tees, who knows what's next for our favorite team?

26 to watch out for in 2006

From page C3



CHAMP LUI PIO
Hail to the Champ! The latest Pied Piper of the music scene makes girls swoon because of his good boy looks and romantic ditties. Hail Hale!

ISABEL OLI
She will be the next Angel Locsin. Her sweet face has endeared her to the *fantaserye*-loving masses and we see her endorsing beauty products. Watch out for her in Edsa!

NATHAN LOPEZ
He maxed us out with his surprise "Maximo" box office hit. This coming year, we expect Nathan to be in full bloom, whether in straight or gay roles.

MARIEL RODRIGUEZ
This girl next door MTV VJ and Pinoy Big Brother host exudes cool and comes up with quirky quotes such as, "*Sige, ubusin nyo ang* load *nyo!*"

UMA BARUM
Philippine entertainment needs its fill of lovable eccentrics who are unafraid to be themselves.

SAVANNAH LUMEN
She's back! Her remixed moody-blues-lounge music is putting audiophiles under her spell. She represents the bright future of local jazz.

Holiday MMS'n!
For only P3, you can now send personalized holiday greetings for a happy holiday season!
Just ₱3 PERSON-TO-PERSON MMS
N70
A Happenin' New Year!
amp ADDICT MOBILE PREPAID
FOR THE COOLEST DOWNLOADS, ACCESS THE ADDICT WAP SITE IN YOUR PHONE MENU.
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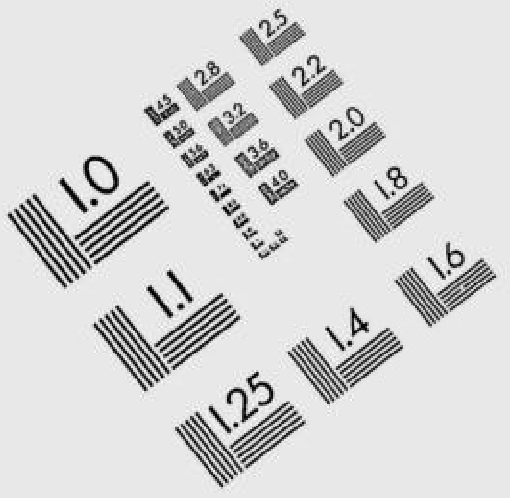
Get hooked.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)


1.0
1.1
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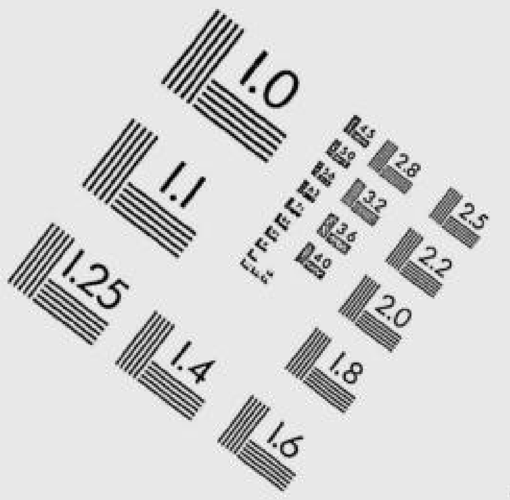
4.0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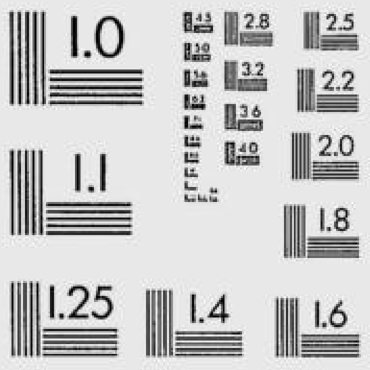
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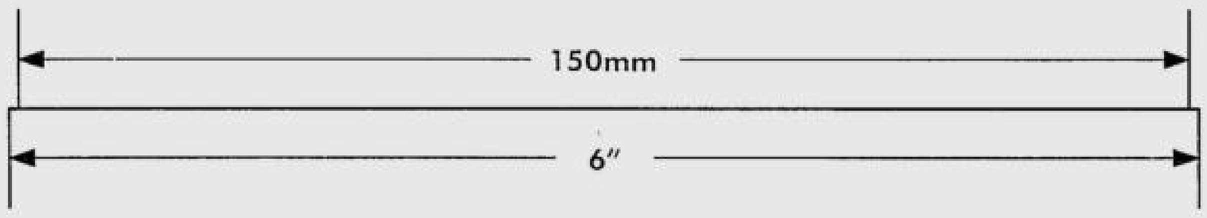

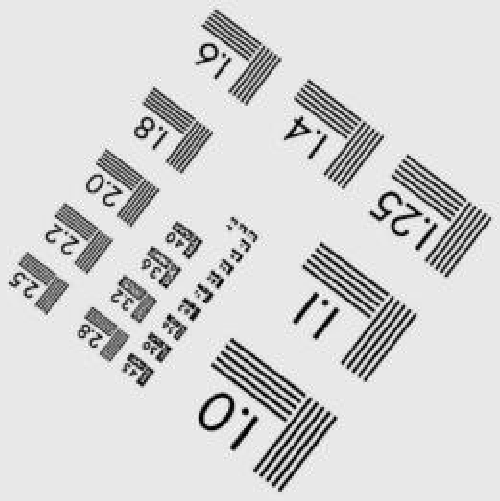
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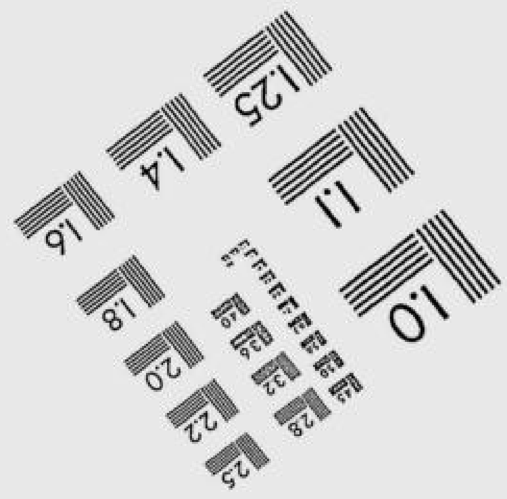
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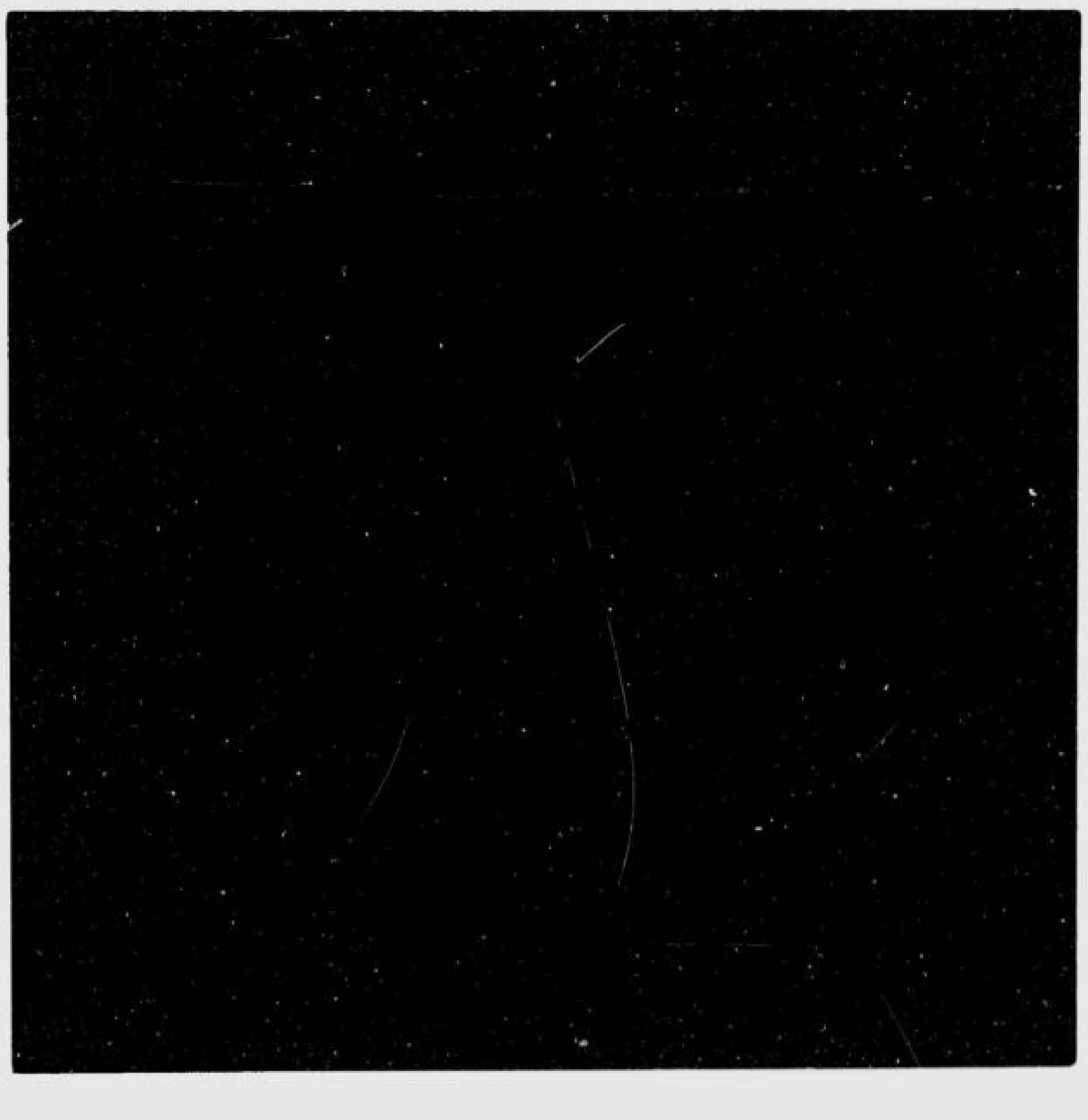
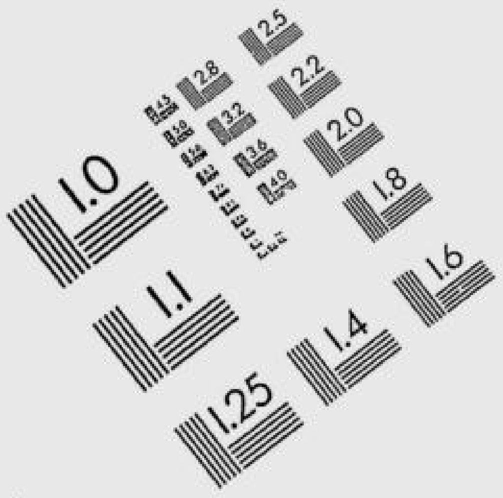


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)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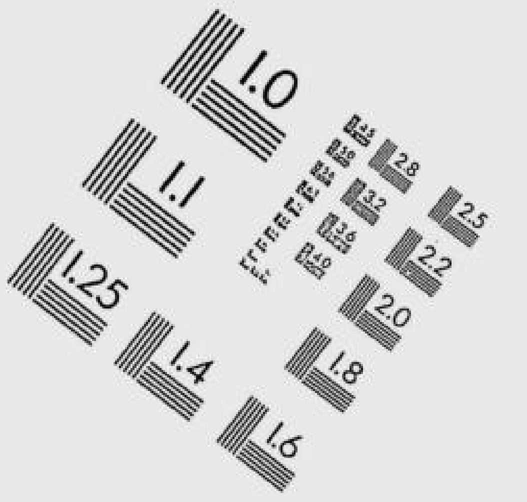
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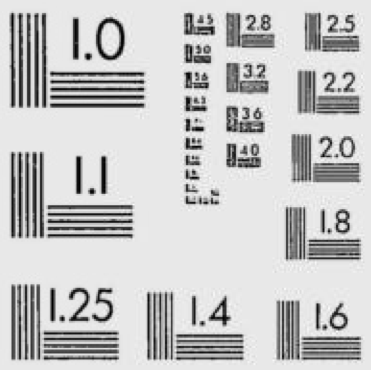
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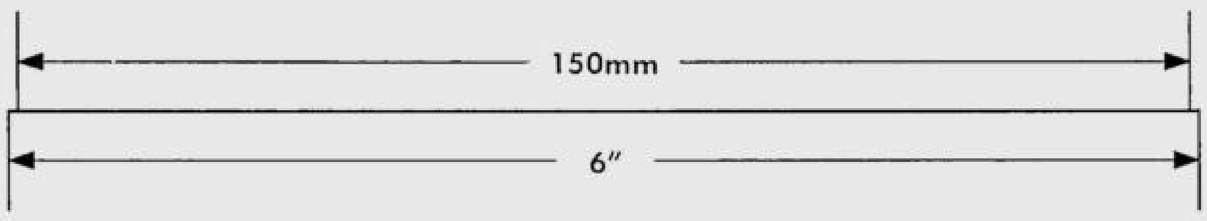

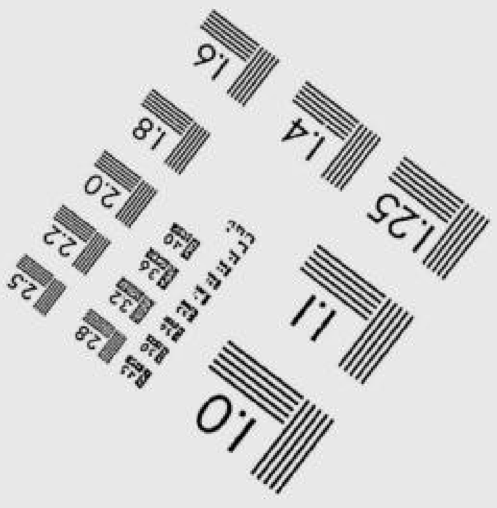
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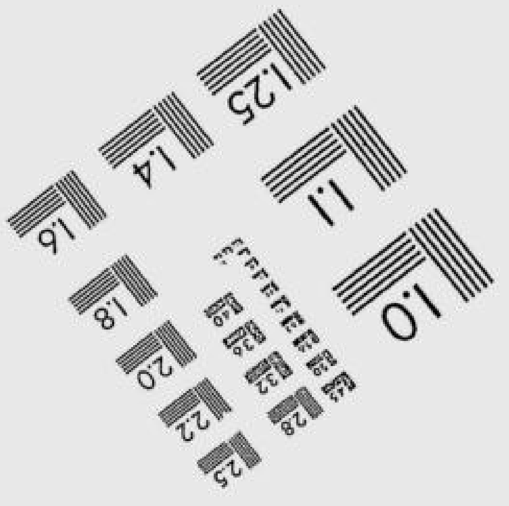
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